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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["I'LL NEVER PART WITH YOU NOW I'VE GOT YOU SAFE, MRS. BLAINE."]

## TWO MARRIAGES.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

THE following Saturday Mr. Vernon, whose appearance had given rise to many serious speculations in the kitchen, was true to his word at the bower.

Georgia was waiting him impatiently. She had discarded her shawl for a thick velvet dress.

She had ordered in quantities of flowers to deck the two or three dozen stands and jars and specimen glasses. She had made the best and most of her short looks. There was quite a colour in her cheeks, colour inspired by hope, that so often tells a flattering tale—hope based on Gilbert's whispered parting promise of bringing her "good news."

She had made up a little parcel for him to take to the children, and had wrung a promise from the doctor that if she continued to improve she might have a short drive in a troleggy next week, and then she would see them.

How her eyes longed for the sight! Alto-

gether she was looking surprisingly better, when Binks ushered in "Mr. Vernon."

But what a change was here! He looked miserable and ill, and wretched—he looked graver than a judge.

"Well," she said, scarcely noticing this at first in her eagerness and impatience, "I have been counting the hours till you came. What have you to tell me? Somehow," pausing, "you do not look as if you brought me good news! And, oh! how strange it is to see you sitting there and talking to you as if you were just an ordinary visitor!"

"I have good news for you, in one sense," he said, at last. "I have seen him! He has come to terms! He will never trouble you any more!" she half started to her feet. "But, stop," putting out his hand, "I have not finished yet. Wait until you hear all. By some means he discovered that I knew where you were. He went to my solicitors, and told them they might offer you this arrangement: to pay him one thousand per annum, punctually in advance. This they agreed to do, on his personal receipt, and provided he gave a solemn promise that he made

no attempt to discover you, or in any way to disturb your life—"

He paused.

"Yes, yes," eagerly, "go on! I know there is more!"

"Besides this, he stipulates that he will not sign this agreement unless I give an equally binding promise never to see you, or speak to you, or have any communication with you as long as I lived!"

"Oh! Gilbert!"—passionately—"you will never promise that? Gilbert! Gilbert!" and she sobbed out his name in a mixture of anguish and love, "I never could bear it, never, never to see you again!"

"It will be hard," he answered, speaking in a low, suppressed kind of voice, "but think of the reverse of the medal. You will never see him again. To a certain extent you will be free—released!"

"The price is too high," she said, looking over at him with a face of rigid pallor. "He will ask me to give up the children next. What do you say to his offer?" she added, with a sudden change of tone.

There was a silence for fully a minute. Her

companion got up, walked to the window, and looked out, then he came back, seemingly having laid in a new stock of self-command.

"I say, take it!" he answered, in a voice scarcely above a whisper. "Yes," proceeding more firmly, "it will be a sacrifice, but you will gain in the end. You will be able to bear it. I must bear it too! What am I to you?—nothing! Any distant friendship between us would only ruin you for ever in the eyes of the world! I will go away. I will go abroad. And something tells me that our troubles will not last long. When things come to the worst they must mend. When night is darkest dawn is nearest! Quite suddenly this cloud fell upon us, quite as suddenly it may disperse!"

"Never! never!" she uttered, with quickened breath, "unless but by one way. There is only one hope."

"And what is that?" asked the other. "His death!" she returned, looking up with a kind of haggard fierceness in her eyes. "I think that I shall kill him!"

"George, George!" cried her companion, "you do not know what you are saying, and indeed, I do not wonder. What you have gone through lately, and this illness and all, is enough to make your brain pass over the narrow border that fences the mind from insanity. You must bear this firmly. It is not so bad as that first wrenoh. You will have the children; you are to see them when you please! You are free from the awful dread of being claimed by him. It might be worse!"

"It could not be worse!" she cried, wildly. "I am losing you. Am I never—never to see you again?" in a rapid, broken whisper.

He bowed his head, unable to speak. "Never!" in a strain of unbelieving agency. "Never in this world!"

He is now dumb. He is more affected than she is, for she can speak, he cannot.

"Then, Gilbert, if you must go—go soon. Get it over!" she said, standing up, and turning to him with a face like death. "I suppose you may not even kiss me now?"

Whether he may or may not have done. He takes her, unhesitating, in his arms, and kisses her passionately—as we kiss those whom we love—from whom we part for ever—whether death has laid his icy hand on them, or whether fate leads them separated from beyond our reach.

Then he released her, and they stood for a moment hand in hand.

Before all was over, Gilbert felt as if the happiness of this life was ebbing away fast—the inevitable moment which must bring parting for ever was hurrying towards them—every beat of his madly-coursing pulses heralded its approach.

"He only gave me half-an-hour to make it known to you—time is up," he said, at last, in a husky voice, "and he must have his answer before seven to-night. Heaven bless and keep you, George! Never forget me, though I am thrust out of your life! No one shall ever take your place in mine!"

And then there was a sound of hurried footsteps, of a door closing—he was gone!

George sat down, gazing out into the front garden with dazed, vacant, unseeing eyes. She felt as if she had no feeling, as if she were turned to stone. She was not even crying.

Binks now came in with the afternoon tea-tray, full of latent excitement and curiosity, and has to speak three times before the rigid figure on the sofa was aware of his presence.

"Pretty doings, indeed!"

Binks had come in before, very quietly, certainly, and left as noiselessly as she entered. She had seen this lady in Mr. Vernon's arms. He looked as if he were saying good-bye for a good while, and his face as he went out was as white as death. Mr. Vernon and Mrs. George—of course she might be a widow, and in that case there was not a

word to be said; and as to her, she looked more like a graven image than a living woman, as she sat, ash white, with bent head and locked hands. Was she going to have another illness?

Within a week, all business arrangements being completed, Mr. Vernon sailed for a voyage round the world, with no definite idea as to how long he was going to be away, and Mrs. George, seeing his departure notified among the P. and O. passengers, set her face towards her children, whom her late trouble had quite thrown into the background in her thoughts.

She called at Lady Fanny Barton's, Mr. Vernon's maternal maiden aunt, who had them in her keeping, the very first day she was able to be out, and rapturous was the meeting between the boys and their mother, but quite the reverse of rapturous between their grand-aunt, Lady Fanny, and that unfortunate young lady.

She (Lady Fanny) was a spinster, who had always considered that her sister, Lady Elizabeth, in marrying good-looking Gilbert Vernon (the elder) had considerably lowered herself in the social scale, although the Vernons had a good estate, and were a respectable old country family.

Some people might differ with her ladyship. She and her sister were members of a numerous family of daughters. They had small fortunes and larger ideas about expenditure. Anyway, Lady Elizabeth managed to cripple her husband's resources in an alarming manner, but died before she reduced him to absolute poverty.

Family rank, good blood, were what Lady Fanny worshipped, and money. She was not averse to the handsome luxuries to her income that these grand nephews brought her; but then the scandal!

She had always been averse to Miss Gray, a mere companion. Gilbert her nephew, ought to have married his cousin Isabel—a suitable match in every way; but with these low marriages among her near connections she really—raising hands and eyes—did not know what the world was coming to!

She regarded her new niece-in-law, Mrs. Gilbert, a very pleasing reception, and made no wedding gift.

Her feelings may be imagined, but not described when, after four years, it is discovered that this wretched young woman has a husband all the time in the background.

Lizette, fresh from the scene of the disaster, poured all particulars fresh into her aunt's horrified ears, and at first she was inclined to cast off the entire Vernon connection in the heat of her indignation, but, on cooler reflection, she resolved not to send the family linen to the public wash, but to hush it up as much as possible.

In the end, Gilbert, who had great influence with the old lady, prevailed on her to give the children a temporary home, and, after a hard battle and many hard words, she agreed to allow their mother to visit them when she pleased; but—

"Remember this, Gilbert," she concluded, imperiously, "it must be understood that I am not called upon to meet her or see her."

The old lady seemed quite to have forgotten this stipulation in the present instance, as she sent a message to the nursery that she wished to see Mrs. Blaine in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Blaine, the very name so coolly repeated by the servant, made her wince as if she had been struck across the face with a whip, especially when Aldek, the most precious, looked up sharply from the lovely box of soldiers she had brought, and said—

"Mother, who is Mrs. Blaine?" She shook her head; she could not tell him. When time came to take leave there was a scene. The boys clung to her, and cried, and said—

"You are not going away again—no, never again, mother!" and it was only by promises of returning the next—promises like pie-

crust—that she was allowed to tear herself away, and even then there was weeping.

She was ushered into the drawing-room, and there found Lady Fanny, a stout old person, in a black velvet dress and white cap with mauve ribbons, with a long upper lip and hard, grey eyes, seated near the fire, at a little table covered with books, papers, and magazines.

She did not even rise, much less hold out her hand, when her late niece-in-law entered. She made a slight inclination of her cap and eyebrows, and said—

"I wished to see you, Mrs. Blaine. Sit down," looking towards a chair.

"Please, do not call me by that name. I wish to be known as Mrs. George," said the other, in a low voice.

"And, pray, why?" aggressively, "when the other is your lawful married name? We have had quite enough masquerading under false names as it is, and a nice scandal you have made in our family!"

"Is it to tell me this that you have sent for me, madam?" said George, rising, with flashing eyes.

"No, no, I have some business to talk over. Sit down, and keep your temper."

Only for the sake of the boys upstairs, and feeling that through them this insolent old dame had a hold on her, George would have taken her departure there and then.

Was not her heart sore enough without this old woman's gibes? As it was she slowly resumed her seat, and did all she could to restrain her temper (as desired), and looked impatiently to hear what the business might be.

"You have money," said Lady Fanny, glancing over her spectacles. "A large fortune has come to you recently through some mysterious will discovered in a cabinet in a second-hand furniture shop."

"Yes, and it is that hateful black cabinet and that will that have been the source of all my troubles," broke in her visitor, hastily. "That money has been my curse!"

Lady Fanny gazed at her in contemptuous amazement. People who talk so impetuously of curses were certainly not ladies, in her estimation.

"Nonsense," she said, impressively, "absurd nonsense! Money never comes amiss to anyone, and least of all to you in your present position. You must immediately make a will, and lose no time about it!"

"A will!" echoed her auditor, blankly, "why?"

"Because if you were to die now," speaking as if it would be no great loss, "all your fortune goes to your husband, Mr. Blaine. Those boys upstairs would not get a penny. In the eye of the law they are nothing to you nor to Gilbert."

She paused to allow her listener to digest this bitter morsel.

"The Vernon estates are strictly entailed, as you know. He can make no provision for them, whilst you can. It is certainly a great pity, especially about the eldest boy. He is a true Vernon, with a slight look of our family, but it seems to me a punishment on Gilbert. He was so sceptical about the whole, suitable girls he met in society. He would have his own way, he would not listen to advice, and see what has—"

George could not speak; she was choking. Her silence was assumed to be assent, and her tormentor continued—

Of course he has had a bitter lesson. Next time he will look for a wife among his own set. Naturally, he will marry again, and have, I hope, other children. As for those poor little creatures upstairs who are neither Vernons nor Blaines, who have no legal parents, I look to you—you who have brought them to such a pass," dramatically waving her fat, red hand, "to provide for them."

George rose. She was trembling with agitation; her face was very white; she could scarcely command her voice; but she managed to say, in a kind of hoarse whisper—



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"I will make my will, I will provide for them. With regard to your nephew—"

She was about to say something violent, but a look in the old lady's hard, cool eye restrained her. Had she not the power to shut her doors upon her, and thus keep her locked out from that elysium upstairs?

She stopped abruptly, pulled down her veil, and walked quickly out of the room, despite Lady Fanny's cry of "Come back, come back! What was that you were about to say as to my nephew?"

The young woman, as she mentally termed her, was already out of the house.

George made her will as directed, and made many visits to her boys, never again encountering their odious grand-aunt.

She walked them almost daily in Kensington gardens. She even was permitted to carry them off to her own home occasionally, and have them all to herself for a whole happy afternoon.

Their visits puzzled the servants not a little. Their names were Vernon, and they called Mrs. George mother. More than that, this curly-headed youngster was her very image.

Months went by. It was now autumn, the leaves were rustling about the little garden in front of the bower; lamps were lighted early, and fogs were constant.

George sat in a low chair at the fire, a boy seated at either side of her. They have been roasting apples and nuts, and are now listening to fairy tales. It is Alice's birthday—be it five to-day!

As George proceeds glibly and impressively with the history of the ugly duckling—with a dark head under one arm, a fair hand under the other—two fascinated faces turned up towards her—she tells herself that, after all, things might have been worse. She is thankful for small mercies, and then she reproaches herself with having for a moment thought of her two dear boys as such.

Alas! she has them. She has been rid of Peter; and alas! of Gilbert!—where is he?

There he is "holding his head to other stars" she knows; that he was in Melbourne when she heard of; and—well, after all, the gap in his life is nothing to what it is in hers.

Nevertheless, she is as near being completely happy this evening as she has been for many months; and the only thing that disturbs her mind at present is the dread of the outer gate bell, and the thing that is now nearly due, and will announce "the nurse and cab for the boys."

Little does she know of what is in store for her; and, indeed, it is just as well, otherwise she would not come in from the gate, having sped her sons with hugs and kisses, and wrapped them up to their very nose, and set down upon a low footstool at the fire, her chin resting on her hand, with a face of such placid contentment.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Mrs LIZZIE FANE had viewed her cousin's departure with more equanimity than could have been expected.

It was best that he should go away till the child had blown over—should go away and see the world; enlarge his ideas; and then come home, and marry a suitable wife (such as herself).

If he had a hankering after Mrs. Blaine she would get over it by that time, and if the children were sent away to some cheap school, a good distance from London, so much the better.

It was ridiculous of her Aunt Fanny to keep them and pamper them, and let that woman see them. Why should she not have them sent here? But this Lady Fanny, said Gilbert would not permit; for fear of Mr. Blaine.

"Mr. Blaine, indeed," scoffed Lizzie, with a shrug, "he is out of the country, and his tongue

has been tied up by means of her purse-strings?"

But Miss Fane was wrong. Mr. Blaine had not left London; his tongue had not been tied; he was heartily dissatisfied with the small sum he had been fool enough to accept. He was resolved to have his rights, and was determined to pocket the remainder of Mrs. Blaine's yearly income.

"What was two hundred and fifty pounds every quarter? Nothing!" he growled, contemptuously. He was on her trail now. She had not only too much money, but too much time upon her idle hands. She had no large household to look after; only herself to cater for; housekeeping nil. No nursery demanded her care; no letters—an [early answer. She had no visitors excepting the boys and Madame Smart; she had no need of pretty dresses; she had no amusements; she had literally nothing to do but sleep and dress and eat. However, she was always of a very energetic turn of mind, and looked out for occupation beyond the Bower. She boldly took a district in the East-end, where she found an ample field for both time and money.

Dressed in the plainest manner, with a veil tightly tied over her face, she went twice or three times a week across London.

She had a sewing-class for girls—being, as we know, an excellent needlewoman herself—and pretty young Mrs. George was most popular with her pupils.

She had a "mothers' meeting" weekly, where [she cut out, basted, and put together garments, which were sewed at for two hours by strange, unkempt, ragged-looking creatures, who stitched very badly, who had been coaxed in with all the artifices that the young lady could command, but who now looked forward eagerly from week to week to Thursday, when, in a clean, bright room (hired), with a cheerful fire, they found their new friend anxiously awaiting them with smiles, and found their work settled and put ready, found flannel, frowsy-looking neighbours turning up with washed faces and clean caps.

Then they all sat round in a circle, whilst she read aloud to them, not from the Bible—its very name would harden the countenance of these half-savages. She must begin gently with these women—with the thin end of the wedge.

She did not know what their antecedents might be. Some of them looked capable of anything, some of them had bruised faces and black eyes. Poor wretches!

She read them some pretty, rather exciting domestic story, with a good moral not thrust too prominently to the front.

She had a sweet voice, and as she sat in the middle of her [crow of flannel, street hawkers, &c., her hat off, her eyes bent on the book, she made a picture that not a few of them passed to look at as they bit off their threads and bungled with the eyes of needles.

What a funny sight it was to see this pretty young lady, so quiet and so at home, and so cheerful, in the middle of them!

There was Nan Bong, the organ-grinder's wife, actually listening with tears in her eyes, as quiet as a mouse—she that was a match, with hands and nails and teeth, for any two policemen. There was Gipsy Bat, the terror of her own alley, sitting up making a flannel petticoat, with stitches two inches long, as sure as she would be roaring drunk on Saturday night.

"What was the reason that this young lady had been able to catch the likes of them?" a more decent-looking woman asked herself.

The truth was these two hours weekly had a good name. One brought another, just for fun at first, and had come again always. They had tried to chaff her, bully her, irritate her at first—all to no purpose. She only smiled and turned off the point of their gibes with some good-natured answer.

Then the room was clean; the fire splendid,

the reading interesting, the work useful (even to pawn).

All work became the property of those who made it. The lady found the stuff. And ere they separated they had tea—first-class tea—no wash; a big cup each, and as much bread-and-butter as they could eat.

They went to their homes, after these little réunions, more humanised; would make an effort to wash up and clean up; would shriek and curse less freely; and the more meetings they went to the more they became reformed. Very gradual, very slow, was this change, but it was sure. Of course there had been some backsliding; and at times George, as she looked round those foxy or wolfish faces, barbarised with poverty, drink, and brutality, her heart sank.

But she had been holding her class now for five months. She was reaping some rewards; he was doing well with her girls and her women; and one evening, after a specially satisfactory meeting, she was on her way home—it was about four o'clock; and as she stood at a crossing, waiting for a chance of getting over, and longing to be out of the mist and mud, and seated safely before her own lone hearth, she felt a rude, heavy hand laid suddenly on her shoulder.

At first she thought it was a policeman, and turned quickly round. She uttered a faint exclamation of horror, when her eyes fell upon Peter Blaine!

Peter, thanks to her money, looking, as far as his clothes were concerned, extremely well-to-do. He wore a top coat, with a deep fur collar and cuffs, a tall hat, and was smoking a fragrant cigar—no evil-smelling tobacco!

"I know your walk," he said, speaking with the cigar still between his teeth, and in the most matter-of-fact manner, as if they had parted on the most amicable terms, say that very morning. "You walk like a Spaniard. I'll say that for you. I've been after you this five minutes. I said to myself 'that's George, for a fiver,'" still holding her shoulder tightly. "It was."

"And if it was," at last recovering the power of speech, "pray what do you want with me?" struggling to free herself quickly.

"Want! That's a good joke!" now taking her arm affectionately, and thrusting his fur cuff and tan glove under the sleeve of her neat brown Newmarket. "Come along; we can't stand jawing in people's way. We will just take a little turn down here, and have a chat," leading her back the way she came—"a comfortable agreeable little talk."

"Say what you have got to say quickly, and let me go," she answered. "What do you want?—more money?"

"Aye, my dear," pressing her arm, "more money, and you!"

"And your written promise never to annoy me, approach me, or attempt to interfere with me?"

"My written promise is not worth a rotten apple. I made it when I was a fool—when I was hard up; but now I'm wiser. It's never too late to mend," giving her arm a friendly pinch, as if to impress this worthy maxim on her mind. "I was an ass to say I would part with you, my treasure, for such a paltry sum as a thousand a year. I set a far higher price on you. I'll never part with you now I've got you safe, Mrs. Blaine."

If passers-by had not been too busy with their own affairs they might have noted this odd-looking couple—a tall, American-looking man, with fair moustache, an imperial, and furred coat, leaning confidentially on a young lady, and whispering rapidly into her ear. Her veil was half up, and discovered only her pretty mouth and chin. Her eyes could scarcely be seen. Had they been visible they were dark, glazed, and distended with terror. Her whole attitude, if you looked at her closely, betokened shrinking repulsion, but the man leant so heavily, so affectionately, on her arm she had no escape. Indeed, to speak the truth, he was scarcely the style of companion you would care to see your sister, your cousin,

or even your aunt walking alone with on a dusky afternoon in one of the East-end streets of London.

"You see, my love, I was unwise to be dictated to by that fellow. I have taken counsel with able friends since. The notion of the lover pensioning off the husband and sending him about his business is quite good enough to be put in a farce, eh? You see it yourself! Your home is with me, under my roof. It's not much of a place yet, but when we have a little more money we will move on, eh? I shall get a Stanhope and pair of good horses, and drive you in the Park. I'll take you to the theatre. I'll take you to races, and, if you're a good girl, over to Paris. Oh, you'll be happy enough, you'll see! I'll show you life, which is more than that other fellow ever did. Kept you boxed up in the country, nursing babies, and making clothes for old women—a nice, lively sort of life that!"

As Mr. Blaine thus fluently discoursed and drew a picture of her future career, Georgie was casting her thoughts on one idea alone—escape! He was evidently taking her home—to wherever his hateful home might be—taking her along quietly and firmly with long, even strides that covered the ground very swiftly.

"Look here!" she said, stopping suddenly, "if you don't let go my arm this moment I'll call the police!"

"Oh, you would give trouble, would you?" giving her as he spoke a fierce little shake. "Do then, my dear, call the policeman. I shall be very glad of his help, and you will only be exposing yourself! And do you know what I shall tell him? That you are my wife; that you have been guilty of bigamy; that I am going to be good enough to take you back, like the kind, easy-going fellow that I am—for the sake of your good name; that all the thanks I get is that you want to run away from me back to your lover, my pretty little dear!"

"That is untrue!" she interrupted, passionately.

"Well, you would if you could, only he is beyond the seas, where I sent him. Yes, I guess his face was a study when he heard my terms! He never expected that would tie his hands, too. No letters, no meetings; no—no—no struggling, Mrs. B." ferociously. "Remember I can run you in for bigamy; seven years in Newgate, my elegant Georgina; so, as the police say, 'you had better come quietly, and anything you say will be used against you.'"

"I'll say one thing—you may use as you like, you cannot charge me with bigamy. There was proof of your death that satisfied everyone; but I can charge you with something, and unless you release me I shall use my power without mercy," speaking through her set teeth. "You are a forger, and I hold the forged bill and proofs!"

"It's a lie!" returned the other, savagely, accompanying the remark with a whole string of blood-curdling oaths; "and if it was true, which it is not, it would make me more resolved to have you," now almost dragging her along by main force—"if more resolved I could be!"

What was to become of her? She felt desperate. There was no possible escape for her but one, and that was to rush into the crowded thoroughfare and throw herself under the wheels of some vehicle, and thus end her misery for ever.

At this critical moment a brass band and a crowd came suddenly round the corner of a narrow street. It was something more than a mere band that attracted hundreds, not of boys and girls and idle women, but of big, burly, able-bodied men, who swallowed up all the foot passengers and carried them along in a kind of current.

Now was Georgie's time—now or never. With the strength of despair she wrenched away her hand, and dived backwards among the mob. Peter saw her, and turned, but where she could wriggle and twist, being thin

and lithe and active, he could not follow. She cared not a straw for pushes and curses. To escape was life, to be caught was death. She clung to the bar outside a shop door as if she were a drowning woman, whilst ten yards away she desisted, in the thickest of the crowd, Peter's tall, glossy hat and Peter's far collar. Then she ducked down and dashed into the shop.

"You're frightened of the crowd, miss?" said an old woman who was sitting behind the counter, knitting and presiding over vegetables, looking at her over her brass spoons. "It's some of their politics and nonsense. They'll be by presently."

"It's not that, my dear, good woman," gasped the other, breathlessly; "it's a man in the crowd who is persecuting me. He will be here directly. Oh!" clasping her hands in a frenzy, "hide me, hide me, and I'll pay you well," she panted out.

"Up you go," pointing to a winding stair that led out of the shop. "You're all right up there; front room," grasping the situation in a moment.

Georgie needed no second invitation. She turned and fled up the dusky stair like a hare pursued by the hounds. She had scarcely reached the top when she was aware of someone in the shop beneath, and a man's voice (Peter's) saying—

"Did a lady come in here?" looking round with his keen, narrow, grey eyes into every corner. "A young lady, in a brown ulster, and wearing a little brown bonnet?"

"Lady! Young lady!" echoed the old woman, querulously, whilst Georgie alone held her breath to listen; "no, we have no young ladies here, as you can see."

"I see," leaning over and taking a good look behind the counter. "No, she's not here," glancing towards the stairs, and telling himself that she had never had time to make her way up there, and square the woman.

"I did see a young person—as looked genteel—outside, now you speak of it, a struggling in the crowd," continued that mendacious person, still serenely knitting. "Seems to me, as she was forced back down the street; she tried to get in here, but it were no go."

And it was equally "no go" loitering here, and losing the golden moments, said Peter to himself, and without any further parley he turned on his heel, and walked out.

"You may come down now; he's gone!" said a husky whisper at the stair-foot, and Georgie obeyed, trembling in every limb. "A nasty, impudent-looking fellow. I put him off nicely, eh?" complacently.

"Oh, you good, kind woman; you don't know what you have done for me," said Georgie, tremulously. "I can never repay you either in thanks or in money," drawing out her purse, upon which the old woman's eyes instantly fixed, with greedy expectation.

"How much would it be? She could not for shame offer less than half a sovereign—may be a sovereign," she said to herself, as she deliberately speared her knitting.

Oh, ecstasy! What did she behold? The whole contents of the portmanteau being poured into her hand—silver, sovereigns, half-sovereigns.

"I'll give you all I have with me, except just enough to take me home," said Georgie, speaking out of her heart; feeling that, as she poured away nearly thirteen pounds, that no money could reward the woman who had screened her.

Mrs. Flood, greengrocer, gasped, as she eagerly closed her fingers on this treasure. She could scarcely speak, so great was her emotion. If she had been as handsomely paid all her life for every lie she had told what a rich woman she would be!

"And now you must help me to get away safely," said Georgie, anxiously clasping her all but empty purse. "How am I to go out into the street and get a 'bus'?"

"I'll see if the coast is clear, miss," hurrying to the door. "There's no sign of him, but I'll send Dan—that's my son—with you

down the side alley here; that'll take you right down on the 'bus and safe home, and many happy days attend you."

Dan duly appeared; a red-faced, fur-capped, long armed, shambling person, who escorted the lady to the place where the red 'bus passed, and was disappointed that he was not tipped.

Georgie guessed at this instinctively, and said,—

"Your mother did me a great service just now, and I gave her every farthing I had except what will take me home. Only for that—"

And here was the 'bus—her haven; he would never dream of looking for her there.

She had stolen along so far, looking behind her every second with agonised apprehension. Now plunged into the roomy 'bus, among straw, among big passengers, big parcels, well up at the far end, her veil drawn down, she felt comparatively safe.

Dan hurried back to his mother, spurred by Georgie's intelligence, and, bursting in as the old lady was hastily fumbling in her pocket, said,—

"Halloo, old girl, how much coin did that smart young woman give you for what you did, eh?"

"Coin! what coin?" in a high key of astonishment.

"Money—coin—come, no nonsense. I see by your face you are keeping it dark. Come how much?"

"Well, Dan," tearfully, "it's worry hard as a poor, hard-working woman, as has to keep myself and you, cannot take a shilling from a lady without you ferreting after it."

"A shilling!" he exclaimed, "a bob! I thought from the way she spoke it was five at the very least. Well, anyway, hand us over a 'sixty.' I'm horrible dry, it will pay for a drink."

"Here! you may have the whole thing," said his parent, generously passing it towards him; "and, for my sake, don't come worriting me again" (she wanted to count her treasure).

As to Mr. Peter Blaine, he hunted the streets in vain; he inquired in every shop that was a likely refuge for "a young lady in a brown ulster and small brown bonnet, with a veil;" but, despite his eager inquiries, and vague hints at large rewards, he had no "look," as he would have called it, and was ultimately obliged to return home, looking as his landlady expressed it, "fit to be tied."

Meanwhile his victim was jolting along in the direction of her own part of the world. She alighted from the vulgar 'bus at her usual corner, and took a hansom for the remainder of the way. So far so good. But when she arrived safely inside her own lighted and crammed-up hall she did not even wait for the privacy of the drawing-room, but, to Bink's horror, suddenly sat down on the first chair to hand, and went off into the most fearful hysterics.

Well, she was a queer one, and no mistake! Stayed out till nine on seven, and comes home and takes on like this. What with her illness, the queer mystery about her, no friends, no letters, no visitors but a couple of children, for some reasons Binks thought a less exciting, more common-place situation would suit. But then it had its advantages. No "door," plenty of leisure, good wages, a nice mistress with large, liberal ideas and plenty of money, and who, although she insisted on her house being kept in apple-pie order, and the little work there was being thoroughly well done, yet "had no nasty, mean ideas," to quote the cook and ancient perquisites, such as crusts, dripping, and rabbit and hare skins, &c., and who never came prying downstairs at odd or unexpected times. She was a lady, and her three domestics stood up for her *en masse* whenever she and her doings were brought upon the tapis by neighbouring servants. To-night she seemed terribly upset and nervous. She had a kind of frightened, wild look in her eyes. Binks remarked it when the storm of hysterics was over. She kept glancing about the



room, asking if the doors were locked and all the windows barred.

"Binks," she said, tremulously, "I've had a dreadful fright to-day. I've seen a person—a man who—who terrifies me. He does not know where I live, but if he should find out and come here do not let him in; in short, let no one in. He is tall, and has a big fair moustache and rather a red face, and speaks with a drawl. If he comes he will not ask for me as Mrs. George, so I prepare you."

"And who will he ask for, mum?—what name? Not that it will make no difference. I won't let him in if you don't wish it, as sure as my name is Susan Binks."

"He will call me either Mrs. Vernon—or Mrs. Blaine."

Susan stared, as well she might, at a married lady who had three different surnames.

"Mrs. George is not my real name, Susan. I tell you this in strict confidence. I am—really—really—I am sorry to say, Mrs. Peter Blaine!"

"And this gentleman with the red face and tight moustache," she asked, quivering with curiosity, "who will he be, ma'am?"

"Mr. Blaine, Susan; but, all the same, you are to shut the door in his face."

(To be continued.)

## HOW FORTUNE COMES.

Years will often elapse before a doctor gets any return for the money which his friends invested in obtaining his diploma. On the other hand, a single fortunate case may bring patients by the score. About twenty years ago, a young doctor who had been established three years in London without making an income, lost heart and determined to emigrate to Australia. He sold his small house and furniture, paid his passage-money, and a week before his ship was to sail went into the country to say good-bye to his parents. Having to change trains at a junction, he was waiting on the platform, when a groom in smart livery galloped up to the station, and calling excitedly to a porter, handed him a telegraphic message for transmission. From some remarks exchanged between the two men, the young doctor understood that the Duke of—, a member of the Cabinet, had fallen dangerously ill, and that an eminent physician in London was being telegraphed for. The groom added that he had ridden to the houses of three local doctors, who had all been absent, and that "her grace was in a terrible way." The young doctor saw his opportunity, and at once seized it.

"I am a medical man," he said to the groom, "and I will go to the Hall to offer my assistance until another doctor arrives."

The groom was evidently attached to his master, for he said,—

"Jump on my horse, sir, and ride straight down the road for about four miles; you can't miss the Hall; any one will tell you where it is."

The doctor went, was gratefully received by the duchess, and happened to be just in time to stop a mistake in treatment of the patient, which might have proved fatal if continued for a few hours longer. The duke was suffering from typhoid fever; and when the eminent physician arrived from town, he declared that the young doctor's management (if the case had been perfect. The result of this was that the latter was requested to remain at the Hall to take charge of the patient, and his name figured on the bulletins which were issued during the next fortnight, and were printed in all the daily newspapers of the kingdom. Such an advertisement is always the making of a medical man, especially if his patient recovers, as the duke did. Our penniless friend received a fee of five hundred guineas, took a house at the West-end, and from that time to this has been at the head of one of the largest practices in London.

## THE TEMPTING BAIT.

A little fish swam in a stream one day,  
And as upward it chanced to look,  
It noticed a bait of a very fine worm  
Scarce covering a glittering hook.  
The red was held by a fair young girl,  
And the little fish also espied  
That the bait was put on by a wealthy old man

Who lovingly stood by her side.  
And the little fish knew in an office hard by  
Leaning over a musty law book,  
Was a handsome young man who'd have given his soul

To have put out a glittering hook.  
So the fish still swam round the very fine worm,

And the maiden, not wishing to wait,  
Said: "Dear little fish, how foolish you are  
To mock at so tempting a bait!"

But just as she spoke, she threw down her rod,

To the old man's regret and dismay;

For the young man stole out of his office door,  
And beckoned her slyly away.

Then the little fish said: "No more foolish than you;

I was waiting to see which you took—  
Your love and his youth, or the tempting bait

Of old age on the golden hook  
We're both very wise, at least so we think,  
Whatever our friends may say."

Then the little fish wagged his silvery tail  
And swam down the river away—

While the old man packed up his rod and line.

But history's page never told  
Tho' he sneezed three times on his journey home,

If the veteran had taken cold!

J. S.

NOVELETTE.]

## THE LOVELY LADY LEIGH.

### CHAPTER I.

SIR FREDERIC GORDON.

SHE was as dark, proud, and lovely as the beautiful, imperious wife of Cæsar—beautiful with that grand, cold, type of beauty that wins the respect as well as the admiration of many.

The words of the old ballad:—

"She had coal black hair, and a chest of gold,  
But the people said that her heart was cold,  
And she scoffed at love as a sin!"

were applied to the lovely Lady Leigh, for to no one had she ever opened her heart, and the worship and adulation which were showered upon her never won more than a fleeting, icy smile, that flickered round the ruby lips, leaving the dark, luminous eyes calm and serenely grave.

The exact extent of her wealth was not known, but she was reported the richest woman in London, and the style of her living, and the exquisite appointments of her luxurious home, all gave an appearance of truth to the saying.

It was getting towards the close of the London season. The trees and grass in the great squares, that had looked so fresh and green a few weeks back, were beginning to dry and shrivel beneath the scorching rays of the July sun, and the theatres and concert-halls were unbearable even to those who were accustomed to heated ball-rooms.

Lady Leigh, wise in her generation, had determined to seek the cool, fresh air of the country, and so she sent out invitations to her dear five hundred friends for a ball ere she departed.

The fifteenth of July was an unusually cool day, and the cool afternoon waned into a

pleasant, starlessly, clear night, with a new crescent moon shining palely in the high blue sky.

The Cedars were ablaze with lights which sparkled and flashed through the trees in the avenue like shooting stars, and the soft, dreamy sound of music was wafted out to the occupants of the different carriages as they rolled noiselessly along the wide path.

Lady Leigh resided in a house near Kensington-gardens—a red brick house, with French roof and windows, the latter draped in pale blue silk and rare lace. There were no disfiguring chimney-pots, and the trees rose above the smooth shining roof in stately grandeur, with the blue sky for a background. The ball room, which was built out at the back of the house, was rich with jardinières and brackets and festoons of exotics, and the air was full of their subtle odour. The walls were hung with the palest blue and the lounges and divans were of the richest blue brocade.

Lady Leigh stood near one of the open windows, the fairest of a hundred fair women, talking to a group of her most intimate friends. The guests had nearly all arrived, the first dance was ended, and the great anxiety of the hostess was over. Her last ball of this season would be a success, she felt, as her dark eyes glanced at the smiling faces round her.

"Who is that lovely girl with the deep brown hair and violet eyes?" asked a young fellow standing near her.

"That is the great beauty, Miss Avonmore, the rich millowner's daughter," replied his hostess, lifting her eyebrows in surprise at his ignorance.

"You will pardon Bertie's apparent stupidity, but he has only just arrived home on sick leave, Lady Leigh, and does not quite know who's who," remarked a tall, soldierly man, who was seated on the lounge.

"There is really no occasion to apologise. Bertie is a privileged being, I heard someone say the other day. Would you like to be introduced?" she asked, turning to his younger brother.

"Indeed, I should!" he returned, gazing in unveiled admiration at the rival beauties as they stood side by side, for Miss Avonmore had crossed the room while the foregoing conversation was being carried on, and had even caught a slight inkling of its purport.

Gertrude Avonmore was a beauty, certainly, with plump white neck and arms glistening with costly jewels. The eyes of sapphire blue, that deepened to an intense purple when the owner was stirred by any emotion, together with the rarely beautiful, milky-white complexion and dark chestnut hair, formed a peculiar contrast that is seldom seen; but there was a something in the calm, lovely face of Lady Leigh beyond mere beauty—a sorrowful calm that never left it in the liveliest company the grandest assemblage.

Miss Avonmore bowed and smiled sweetly in acknowledgment of the introduction to one of England's favoured sons of nobility, murmuring her reply in a soft, low voice, when Bertie Crawford requested the privilege of dancing the next waltz with her.

"Your guests have all arrived, I believe Lady Leigh?" asked Colonel Crawford, pulling his brown beard, in which there were already a few grey hairs, though he was but thirty-five. Colonel Crawford and his wife were among the select few who could lay claim to the title of Lady Leigh's friends.

"All except Lord and Lady Gray, and they are never early," replied his hostess, with a fleeting smile.

Her companion did not speak after that, but stood gazing at her as she half reclined on a lounge in the shadow of the heavy curtains, wondering if that cold, proud heart had ever throbbed with emotion, if she were capable of feeling any emotion save pride, or if she had lost someone who had been dearer than all others to her.

The band was playing a soft, dreamy waltz, and the room was a mass of gleaming satin and flashing jewels. Lady Leigh sat there

silent, coldly thoughtful for some time; then there was a slight stir at the entrance to the immense room, and as the names of Lord and Lady Gray were announced she went swiftly forward with outstretched hand.

She greeted the two new comers graciously, and was about to turn away when she started back with a stifled exclamation on beholding a third person standing in the wide-arched entrance of the spacious apartment. Yet there was nothing so formidable in the appearance of this unexpected guest that it should cause the beautiful, self-contained Lady Leigh to lose that self-command, and half-stagger back with blanched cheeks, and dilated, dusky eyes that stared before her in wild terror.

Nay, he was rather prepossessing, this tall, grave, soldierly man, with the bright, crisp, chestnut hair, soft moustache, clear olive complexion, and keen hazel eyes that glanced round the ball-room, then back again at the woman who stood before him—calm, erect, colder than ever now as she greeted Sir Frederic Gordon with sweet hauteur, who, however, appeared not to have noticed her strange agitation.

"Just home from India!" whispered one dowager to another. "The richest *parti* in London, and, see, he is dancing with our hostess!"

It was even so. The lovely Lady Leigh did not, as a rule, care for waiting, but when Sir Frederic requested the honour in rather stilted tones, for some strange reason known only to herself, she accepted with one of her fleetingly sweet smiles; and a murmur went round the well-heard assemblage that Lady Leigh knew how to play for high stakes, with all her assumed indifference.

But towards the close of the evening Sir Frederic was observed hovering near the new beauty. He it was who wrapped her cloak so carefully round the delicate, white shoulders, and whispered in low, soft accents his wish that he might soon meet her again, as he stood on the white steps in the clear darkness of the starless night bidding her good-bye; and Gertrude Avonmore's heart beat more quickly as she made answer that she would be at the last opera of that season.

Did Sir Frederic Gordon, baronet, mean those words he had just uttered? No! He walked away with a sigh of relief, taking in deep breaths of fresh air as though the heat of the ball-room had stifled him. A few soft words would not hurt a woman, he told himself, as he remembered the glance of Gertrude's violet orbs—their hearts were very pliable. Pahl had they heard at all?

He raised his face to the dark sky, and over it swept a look of agony it is not well to see—a look that would have haunted the mind of a spectator for many a long day had there been one, but Sir Frederic Gordon was alone. Some few minutes later, when he stood complimenting Lady Leigh upon her success, his features were set in their habitual grave, stern lines.

Lady Leigh's proud, dark eyes fell beneath the calm scrutiny of those piercing hazel orbs, and the quick beating of her heart stirred the lace on her satin bodice. A puzzled expression came over his face as he saw her evident emotion, and something like tenderness crept into his tones as he said—

"I am happy to have made your acquaintance, Lady Leigh, and hope, though it may seem premature, that it may ripen into friendship."

And with a deep bow he retired, leaving the beautiful woman standing like one dazed in the midst of the whirl of dancers. Colonel Crawford, looking across at that moment, was startled at the look of dumb misery he saw on her face.

"You are not ill, Lady Leigh?" he cried, coming quickly to her side, and leading her towards a large conservatory.

"I think the heat of the room has overcome me," she replied, quickly recovering her presence of mind. "This has been a most try-

ing season; I am glad it is over," and, indeed, Lady Leigh looked more fit for her boudoir than the heated ball-room and noisy, clashing band. Her face was pale as Parian marble, and there were lines of care beneath the large dark eyes.

"My wife and I were just going," remarked the Colonel; "and I fancy that now the belle is not there the rest will soon take their departure."

Colonel Crawford's prediction was verified, much to Lady Leigh's relief. The great ball-room was deserted, save by a few faint streaks of grey light that struggled across the polished floor, and rested on her pale proud face.

"Oh, Heaven, this is worse than all! Did I deserve this?" she murmured, clasping her white jewelled hands across her bosom.

She turned away, and walked up the long flower-lined corridor, up the broad stairs, where the air was heavy with the odour of japonica, so to her own room, where her maid sat half asleep and awaiting her.

"You need not wait, Fanchette," she observed, when the girl had removed her jewels and braided her long masses of black hair; and Fanchette, nothing loth, took her candle and retired.

Left alone, Lady Leigh paced up and down in the pale light of early dawn, gazing half tenderly, half angrily, at a ring of pearls she wore on her left hand. Presently she went to the window, and opening it leant her elbow on the sill, and gazed fixedly into the grounds below.

Faint streaks of rosy light were flushing the sky, and tiny, fleecy clouds, edged with palest gold, floated across the tall treetops like fairy islands, and the birds awoke with the rising of the sun and filled the air with sweet, shrill twitterings, and then they left their soft nests and hopped amongst the thick, green leaves, scattering sparkling drops of morning dew on to the smooth lawn below.

Still Lady Leigh stood there, staring with those large, mournful eyes into vacancy. Never once had she moved, and so she remained. The sun rose high in the heavens and touched her dark head with his golden shaft; long golden shadows lay across the grass, and golden lights glimmered among the leaves. On the morning breeze was borne the perfume of many dying flowers, and it swept across the lovely pale face, bringing a little of the old life and bloom back, but she seemed heedless of all this awakening beauty.

What was this sorrow that had so suddenly come upon the favoured child of fortune, the queen of beauty and fashion? Has the proud heart awakened to an old sorrow, or is it called into life too late?

The breeze gave no clue to the sorrow, and no word of hers betrayed what were her thoughts, as she stood there so cold and still, taking no heed of the glorious beauty of the dawn, the merry sounds of life around her. She was roused at last by the sound of someone knocking at her door.

"I do not need you, Fanchette," she said in clear, cold accents, as she opened the door, and discovered her maid standing there with a cup of chocolate on a tray, together with a dainty morsel of cold fowl. "You can leave the chocolate, but take the other things away," she added, and Fanchette, accustomed to do her bidding without question, took her departure.

Once more alone Lady Leigh went to a large Chinese box of exquisite workmanship, and opening it stood gazing into the interior with a rapt expression on her lovely face—a look that revealed the capabilities of the strong, passionate soul that was hid beneath that cold calmness of hers.

It was no longer the face of a cold, living statue, but the face of a beautiful, passionate, loving woman—a woman who would do nothing by halves, but loving well would also hate with equal intensity. The smile that broke over the chilled features was bitterly scorn-

ful, though a tender glow yet lingered in the dark wells of her brown eyes, and she closed the lid with a sharp snap, as though she would thus snap the last link that bound her to a dread, unhappy past.

"His was the blame," she murmured, as she turned away from that hidden treasure; "aye, and guilt too," she added, with a bitter scorn transforming her fair features; and then she drew the blinds, and with a weary sigh sought her couch.

## CHAPTER II.

"SILENT GRIEF SHALL BE MY GHOST."

THE last night of the opera. A sight worth seeing—that galaxy of beauty without the intoxicating addition of fragrant, rare exotics and glittering light. The *prima donna* was in splendid voice, and the exquisite notes rang out upon the hushed silence in a ravishing trill.

Lady Leigh was there—cold, calm. Nothing in her beautiful, statuesque face revealed the fact that a turmoil of old memories was raging in her heart.

Sir Frederic Gordon was there too, basking in apparent absorbed worship over the new beauty, Gertrude Avonmore.

Many bright eyes were fixed upon the occupants of the box opposite Lady Leigh's—some with jealousy in their glance, some with admiring envy of the girl whose beauty held the hitherto invulnerable heart of Sir Frederic in thrall.

Tales of the coldness with which he met the advances of the softer sex, of the bitter sarcasm of his remarks on their capabilities of faith and love, had travelled faster than the steamer that brought him back to his native shore; and his ready capitulation to Gertrude Avonmore's charms was therefore deemed a victory of no ordinary character for that young lady to score.

Once, when after listening in rapt attention to the clear voices of the singers, he raised his head, and met the calm, haughty glance of Lady Eudora Leigh fixed upon him; and Gertrude Avonmore, who never lost one expression of the face that had taken her heart captive wondered that the voice of a woman should have power to bring such a look of passionate yearning to his keen, hazel eyes. Madame —'s voice was perfect, but she had thought him too cold and stern to be affected by singing.

She raised her violet eyes shyly to meet his grave glance as he turned away from the contemplation of the crowded house. The sheen of golden hair, the glamour of softly-glancing eyes, the gleam of polished shoulders, and pouting of ruby lips had lost their charm for him; but Gertrude did not know this. It seemed to her that he turned away from all this beauty to gaze upon her, and a thrill half sweet, half pain, swept over the yet untouched chords of her maiden heart. She did not ask herself what this meant, it was too new, too strange as yet. Ah! Gertrude, take care that you love not wisely, but too well.

And Lady Leigh sat there listening apparently to the operatic performance, but no glance, no movement of those in the box opposite escaped her notice. Lorgnettes were levelled at her as she sat there, a figure of marvellous beauty, draped in rich crimson velvet, with priceless lace on the square-cut bodice and Grecian sleeves; and Lady Leigh gracefully inclined her stately head, and smiled that fleeting, icy smile as she recognised her friends. She was soon besieged by them, but she made her desire not to lose a note of the *prima donna's* last song, an excuse for her silence.

The opera was *Faust*, at *Marguerite*; and as the last tones of that lovely voice died away the house rose as with one accord, and thundered forth its applause, showering exquisite bouquets down upon the stage in rapturous haste.



In the midst of this scene of high-bred excitement the door of Lady Leigh's box opened, and Sir Frederic Gordon entered. He stood for a moment gazing on the superb picture she made in her crimson velvet, old lace, and pearls, and then advanced with his grave, courtly smile.

"You will pardon me, Lady Leigh, for the liberty I have taken, but your own glass will give you my excuse," he said, bowing low before her.

"Sir Frederic Gordon is always a welcome intruder where the Lady Leigh is!" returned the low, sweet voice.

Was it fancy, or did those softly-uttered tones falter? Sir Frederic glanced up quickly, and their eyes met, and for a moment they remained so; then hers drooped beneath his gaze, and a rich red flushed the clearly pale cheeks.

"Am I to take those words as they are uttered, or as merely society jargon?" he asked then, bending over her till the faint odor of violets crept up to him from her heavy black hair, and seemed to mingle with the sounds around him.

Lady Leigh drew herself up haughtily, as she replied, in tones of deliberate coldness,—

"You have travelled, Sir Frederic; surely you have gained experience? Can you not judge the sincerity of a person's words yet, and judge between that and society politeness?"

He gazed at her earnestly for a few moments, then over his grave, dark face swept a look haughtily proud as her own, and his tones were disdainful in their pride and scorn as he bent towards her, saying in a voice none but herself could hear,—

"It would seem, Lady Eudora Leigh, that I must come to England to really discover what pride and want of truth and faith are. In those Eastern climes women know what love is, but I doubt me if ever the heart of an English woman was troubled with a thought of it."

"The women in those Eastern climes have taught Sir Frederic chivalry towards their sex," returned Lady Leigh, coldly, as she turned away with a slight bow of dismissal.

"Cold and heartless," he muttered, as he hastily traversed the carpeted corridors on his way back to Gertrude Avonmore's box.

"Was not Lady Leigh kind?" asked the soft voice of the rival beauty, and Sir Frederic smiled slightly beneath the bronze at her words.

"Lady Leigh's kind words and smiles have little or no charm for me," he replied, with a significant glance into her deep violet orbs. "I merely visited her as I should anyone to whose house I had been invited."

Gertrude smiled a bright, happy smile, and over the lovely flower-like face shone a radiance as of the sun.

"Can you not see, Sir Frederic, that you are winning the love of the gentle-hearted girl? Pause while yet there is time."

But the fated baronet liked the gentle, dark-haired beauty, and had no thought of how she might interpret his attentions. Indeed, he deemed all women incapable of any deep feeling, or so he would have told anyone had they possessed temerity enough to speak to him on the subject, and so it did not matter.

"And you are going down to Broadstairs?" she asked, holding her fan over her face to hide the eager flush that rose to the roots of her dark hair.

"No, I am going down to my own place at Brixley," he returned, with a sigh of satisfaction, as he thought of the cool shade of the lindens near his favourite haunts by the river and the sharp, brisk walks in the morning air. "One can breathe there," he added.

And then they were silent, listening in earnest to the ravishing voice of Madame

A breathless hush was in the house; and when the curtain dropped on the last scene for a few seconds no sound was heard; then, once again, there arose a shout of

applause, which lasted until the beautiful singer appeared at the footlights again.

Mrs. Ventley, a lady of some standing in the aristocratic world, and who had presented the heiress to Her Majesty at the last drawing-room, was with the new beauty in the capacity of chaperone, and when Sir Frederic rose to bid them adieu she turned to him with a sweet smile, saying,—

"We shall see you after our visit to Broadstairs, for I find that our next place of rustication is Lord Grafton's, and that is near your estate, I believe?"

Sir Frederic stroked his moustache to hide the cynical curve that curled his mouth at this evident, though gracefully put, hint.

"You want to catch this fish, but he has felt the hook," he thought. Aloud he said, "Then I may have the pleasure of seeing you at Brixley Court? We must make up a party and have a picnic. There are some ruins there really worth seeing."

"Oh, indeed, you are too kind!" murmured the lady, in a deprecating tone.

"Lord Grafton is a great friend of mine. I had no idea I should have the pleasure of seeing you there," he said, turning to Gertrude. "He has some splendid shooting on his estate almost equal to mine, and we often make a party on each other's grounds. It makes a change."

"Are you so fond of change?" asked the girl, looking up at him archly from under her long, dark lashes.

"Not always. I shall feel happy, knowing I shall see one face I knew in London," he returned, pointedly.

He had forgotten next moment that he had uttered those words, but not so the heiress, from whom a dozen handsome, pleasant young fellows would have given half their fortunes to gain a smile or word of encouragement. Lilly moth, have you not yet learned to value compliments at their true worth?

"We are going now to Mrs. Vere's soirée," observed Mrs. Ventley, as they walked slowly along the crowded corridor. "I fancy I heard you say you were going; and, if so, you might have a seat in our carriage—that is, if it is agreeable—"

"I shall only be too pleased!" interrupted Sir Frederic.

"Lady Leigh's carriage—Lady Leigh's carriage," called out a loud monotonous voice.

Sir Frederic stood still while the beautiful, stately woman slowly descended the broad steps leading from the Opera-house. She glanced up as she stepped into the dainty brougham, and meeting his gaze bowed coldly.

"Do you not think her lovely?" said Gertrude. "I have never seen anyone like her. She makes one think of those Grecian beauties we read about."

"Certainly one looking at her is reminded more of a beautiful statue than of a living woman," he replied, with a slight sneer.

"You do not admire that cold statuesque style? Neither do I, Sir Frederic," remarked Mrs. Ventley, with a complacent smile at her protégée's fair face, over which a hundred different expressions flitted in a few minutes.

"Nay, I did not say that," observed Sir Frederic, gravely. "I do admire statuesque beauty, but I like a woman to appear to have a soul as well as beauty."

Mrs. Ventley glanced covertly at the handsome baronet as he uttered these words. Was he piqued at her coldness? And yet, if report spoke truth, she had thawed to him only a few nights back. Why, then, speak in those bitter accents of her want of soul?

"Some people say the Lady Leigh is heartless," said Gertrude Avonmore.

"I should fancy those people know her well," he said.

"There you are wrong. I like Lady Leigh, and will not hear her spoken of alightingly in my presence. I cannot help fancying that she has had some sorrow in the past that has made her heart cold to all the rest of the world."

"Miss Avonmore is romantic!" laughed Sir Frederic, as he assisted them into their carriage. "Wait till you have mixed in society a bit."

"What shall I learn then, Sir Frederic?" asked the low, sweet voice.

"You will learn to take love, or what is so mis-named love, for what it is worth—that there is no such thing as truth; and as for fidelity, it is an obsolete word amongst the 'upper ten.'"

"I am sorry to hear Sir Frederic Gordon give expression to such sentiments. I thought the world had been kind to you, but I see that you also have had your romance," returned Gertrude.

Sir Frederic started and paled beneath the bronze as she spoke, her violet eyes fixed upon him with a searching, but not un-maidenly gaze.

"No man has lived to my years, travelling about, too, as I have, without once or twice fancying himself in love," he said, a trifle hesitatingly, after a moment. But the girl saw there was more in the past of this grave, bronzed general than a fancied love.

They had arrived by this time at Mrs. Vere's residence, one of those palatial houses in Kensington, standing in its own grounds. The place was lined with carriages, and it was some minutes ere they could alight. Soft exquisite strains of music floated out on the air, and the sounds of gay, laughing, high-toned voices mingled pleasantly with the notes.

Mrs. Vere, a tall, handsome, black-browed woman of the Roman type, and who was passionately fond of music, greeted them with a smile as they entered the drawing-room.

"You are late!" she said, "and Lady Leigh has only just come."

"Indeed! I did not know she would be here," returned Mrs. Ventley, in a tone of cold annoyance. She thought she had steered the catch out of the reach of this imperial beauty, and here she had brought him to the lion's den.

"Oh! the evening would not be complete if Lady Leigh were not here!" and Mrs. Vere turned to greet some new-comers.

"What can people see in Lady Eudora's looks to rave so about her? Now Gertrude is really lovely."

"Granted, Mrs. Ventley; she is charming, but Lady Leigh's beauty were she to thaw would be marvellous. Pardon me, I see she is going to sing," and he crossed the room, Gertrude having been taken possession of by Bertie Gordon, and seated himself near the piano.

Lady Leigh looked up from the pile of music she was searching through, and saw Sir Frederic and as though from sudden impulse she turned back to the songs she had thrown aside, and selecting one seated herself and commenced,—

"I linger round the very spot

Where years ago we met,

And wonder when you quite forgot,

Or if you quite forget.

And old, fond memories rise anew

For love that used to be;

If you could know that I was true

And I that you were free.

Ah, ah, ah!

Love once again, meet me once again,

Old love is waking, shall it wake in vain?"

The baronet sat perfectly still; never a muscle moved, but the keen hazel eyes were dim, as with sorrowful thought, as the passionate thrilling voice rang out amidst the hushed silence—a silence as deep as that which had reigned in the opera house when the *prima donna* sang to her audience, for Lady Leigh's voice was marvellous in its sweetness and power.

Many of her friends had told her she would make her fortune on the stage, but Lady Leigh did not care for the publicity, and she had no occasion to use her voice as a means

to fortune, and so only a few heard one of the loveliest voices ever possessed by woman.

"And ever thus, my thoughts incline,  
And back my memory slips,"

went on the clear, sad voice, rising and falling with each varying note till her listeners were spellbound. Never had she sang with such feeling as this. It seemed almost as though there were tears in the pleading tones of the last lines,—

"Old love is waking, shall it wake in vain?"

Sir Frederic bent forward and said, with a slight, sadly grave smile,—

"Lady Leigh, your voice and song have awakened old, fond memories in my past I would have wished to remain dormant."

"Can you not bury them, deep, deep?" she asked, as she commenced "In the Gloaming," at the request of Colonel Gordon.

"I am not so feeble, Lady Leigh. It is a woman's province to forget, it seems to me, though they talk so tragically about 'for women, the calm and the pain,'" he returned, coldly as she herself.

"By Jove! Lady Leigh has a splendid voice," said Bertie Gordon, who was sitting on a velvet lounge in the deep embrasure of the window with Gertrude Avonmore. "Sir Fred seems taken with it too."

Gertrude glanced quickly at the group round the piano, and a shadow came over her face, which Bertie was not slow to see.

"Sir Frederic looks very grave—more fit for the club-room than a soiree," she replied, with a little forced laugh.

"Poor fellow! He has had enough to make him grave," answered Bertie.

"I thought he had had some trouble," said Gertrude.

"What was it, Mr. Herbert?"

"Well, I spoke at random, rather, but I fancy he was very nearly married to someone over in Ireland, an English girl; but she jilted him shamelessly or something of that sort. I know she behaved very badly."

"And he still grieves over her? She must have been heartless," said Miss Avonmore, in a musing tone.

"Confound him!" muttered Bertie, pulling his long moustache.

"Did you speak to me?" she asked absently, raising her large eyes innocently to his face.

"No," and he flushed as he met her gaze, "but I felt rather vexed that he should take up all the interest to the exclusion of everyone else."

"Have I been rude? I am truly sorry, Mr. Gordon," exclaimed the girl, in penitent tones.

"Gertrude Avonmore could not be rude, if she tried," replied Bertie, softly, bending his grey eyes tenderly upon her; and the hairless meeting that glance knew that she had won this love, though that which she wished for was withheld, but her heart never stirred by one beat more than usual beneath her lace bodice; and she felt sorry to think that perhaps his life was spoiled through her.

Meanwhile Lady Leigh had risen from her seat at the piano, and Sir Frederic Gordon had taken her place. He had a strong clear baritone, and Gertrude Avonmore drew near to listen. He sang Moore's "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," and then someone asked for another. He hesitated for a moment; then with a quick glance at Lady Leigh's lovely calm face, shaded from the full glare of the gaslight by the drooping folds of the lace curtain, he commenced,—

"Only a heart that's breaking,  
That is, if hearts can break;  
Only a man adrift for life,  
All for a woman's sake."

More than one there felt that there was the depth of bitter scorn and passion of one who had felt the sting of a woman's unfaithfulness in those strong, powerfully rendered tones; but none there saw the look of startled sorrow that leaped to the queen of beauty's eyes, nor

how the lace on her velvet bodice fluttered with the heaving of her perfect bosom.

"The dupe of an heartless flirt."

How these words and the scorn on his lips as he sang them haunted her, long after she left that brilliant assemblage. But what was the link that bound these two so mysteriously to an unhappy past? Ah, what?

Was she the heartless flirt he had so pointedly named her, or was there some terrible mistake, here? Only time could show. There was real sorrow in the great dark eyes that gazed so mournfully at the beautiful reflected face—real passionate anguish in the tones in which she cried out,—

"Oh! Frederic, Frederic! would that the past could be recalled, and that you had been more true."

As Gertrude Avonmore took her seat in her brougham that night she leant forward, moved by a sudden impulse, and said, with a gentle friendly smile to Bertie Gordon, who had escorted them from the house,—

"We shall see you at Briarley, Mr. Gordon? We go to Broadstairs to-morrow, and then, after a few weeks, to Lord Grafton's."

"No," he replied quietly. "Have you not heard that now I am better I am going back? I have volunteered for this new expedition, and been accepted."

"I am sorry," said Gertrude, gravely.

"That is all I can find to say, but I am surprised—shocked, Mr. Gordon."

"There is no occasion to be shocked, I assure you, Miss Avonmore. There is not the slightest danger, and if there is I like it. It is my profession," he returned.

Gertrude gazed in involuntary admiration at this tall handsome man, who loved her, as he stood there with the light of earnest enthusiasm on his face, and bright, straight, steady gleam in his clear grey eyes; and a little pang of regret shot through her heart as she remembered that he was going away, perhaps to his death. At this she paled. The young heiress was impressionable and a hero-worshipper, and though he little dreamt it he was nearer her heart, as he stood there talking so carelessly about the impending war, than he ever would have been had he remained at home as he was entitled to do. So strange are the workings of a woman's heart!

A few hours before, if anyone had told her she would experience such a pang for handsome, careless Bertie Gordon, she would have laughed; but Sir Frederic's song had opened her eyes, and she guessed that he and Lady Leigh were not the strangers they appeared to be; and Gertrude, young and affectionate, turned for sympathy where she was loved.

"Then I must say good-bye now?" she said, and there was a shade of wistfulness in her tones.

"Yes," and now his voice was not quite so steady. "Good-bye, Gertrude. If I fall you will not forget me?"

He turned away with those words, and in the time to come she remembered with a soft, sad smile that he had called her "Gertrude."

There was no love in her heart now, only a half regret for the man who had loved her, and gone away so bravely to what might prove his death.

### CHAPTER III.

A glorious day in the middle of August, the sun shining down in rich, warm, golden light over yellow corn-fields, softly swaying trees, long, emerald grass, and bright, gleaming river.

Briarley Court stood at the entrance of Briarley Park—a tall, white stone building, with dazzlingly bright windows draped in pink, and turreted roof. The doors and windows all stood wide open, and a pleasant breeze swept along the lofty hall, and up the carved, oaken staircase—a breeze that had stayed in its course from the river to gather the fragrance of summer's last flowers.

Round two sides and the front of the house

a broad verandah ran, where one could saunter or read, sheltered from the heat of the sun by the great passion-flower and American climbing plant, now changing to bright, gaudy hues.

A broad, green slope, in the centre of which a fountain played, seeming to cool the air as its clear, crystal spray sprang up from the marble figure of Niobe, led to a plantation of firs, behind which was a lake on whose bosom the waters slept, rocked to their rest by the soft wind that swept like an Æolian harp across its surface.

Truly a fair domain, with the high hills rising in the distance against the clear, blue sky smiling in the sunshine, down upon the valleys beneath, and the corn bent and rippled like a golden sea as the wind swept across it, while to the left tall hop-poles stood erect and straight in the hop-grounds.

Perfect silence reigned over the whole place, as though the heat had wooed the inhabitants to slumber; but presently the form of a man appeared—a tall, soldierly man, with erect bearing, and grave, handsome face, set off by a pair of keen, glancing, hazel eyes.

He was walking in the plantation where there was a coolness as of spring from the breeze that played hide-and-seek backwards and forwards among the tall, rocking firs, and hares scampered across his path now and again, losing themselves in the thick broom and underbush; wild hyacinths bloomed here in the spring, and the fairy-like hare-bell; but the ground was strewn with dry, brown stalks that crackled under his feet, and dead leaves lay about, betokening the near approach of autumn.

From the plantation beyond the grounds, immediately round the house, was a fruit orchard, and the sun shone merrily down on the golden apples, dainty peaches, and luscious pears till they busied rosy cheeks beneath his gaze; then he ran laughingly off to peer at the nectarines nestling among their thick, green leaves, bringing a tinge of colour to their soft, downy cheeks.

Sir Frederic, taking in with keen appreciation all this loveliness of nature, over which he reigned as master, heard suddenly in the road at the side of the plantation the rumbling of light carriage wheels, and a few moments afterwards he saw the carriage from Grafton bowling swiftly up the broad pathway in front of the house.

The occupants of the vehicle were Lady Grafton and Lady Leigh, and Sir Frederic hastened his footsteps, arriving at the house a moment before them.

Over Lady Leigh's face there was a pallor most unusual to her, and round the large, dark eyes, so beautiful in the new softness that had of late crept into them, there were violet lines as from sleepless nights.

"Lady Grafton, this is an honour of which I was quite unaware I was to be the recipient!" he cried, holding out his hand to assist her to alight, then turning to Lady Endora.

"We were so near that I thought it might appear unneighbourly not to pay you a visit," replied Lady Grafton, shaking her silvery curls as she ascended the steps.

"I certainly should have taken it in that light," he said. "Lady Leigh," he added, turning to her as she stood gazing around her with a look almost of agony on her chiselled features, "welcome to my home."

She looked at him, detecting the irony of his tone, and in the warm, sunlit air she shivered.

"Your estate is perfect, Sir Frederic!" she said, in a cold, icy voice, bowing in response to his words.

"It is, I think. Some women would be only too happy to be its mistress; but, then, you see, I don't want them. I have had my love 'treated like common dirt' once. It is best to fight shy. You agree with me, Lady Endora?"

There was a peculiar, mocking light in his eyes as he spoke, and she caught at one of the



stone pillars that supported the verandah, facing him in the perfumed air.

"No, Sir Frederic, I do not agree with you!" she cried, with sudden passion. "You are cruel, merciless, as you were faithless in the past!"

And staying not for reply she swept past him up the steps into the lofty hall, where statues of priceless worth laved their white feet in cool fountains, and hid themselves amongst softly rustling ferns.

The joyous sound of a child's voice rang through the house as she stood still in the hall, one hand pressed over her heart. A merry laugh, then the scampering of tiny feet, and in another moment a little, fairy-like creature, with dark, glossy hair floating behind her white robe like a silken veil, came running along the hall.

Eudora looked down into the upraised eyes, deep, large, hazel eyes that took in every line of the lovely, sad face, and a thrill passed through her.

Who was this child with eyes so like his?

"You bo'ful, you are. You may kiss me if you like," said the child, in the imperious tone of one accustomed to being petted.

"Who are you, child?" cried Eudora, as she knelt beside the lovely white vision.

"Tiss me, and then I will tell you my name," answered the imperious little beauty, and Lady Leigh pressed her lips to the innocent rosy-bud mouth held up to her, with a fervour and passion the child did not understand, for she gazed a little astonishedly at the beautiful dark-eyed woman kneeling on the painted floor in her silks and rich laces.

"Will you not tell me your name now, dear?" she asked, gently.

"Yes, my name is Pearl; papa always calls me Pearl—his Pearl," replied the clear, ringing baby voice. "Are you ill? You eyes big!" and the soft baby hands were lifted to stroke the pale cheeks down which the tears were falling fast.

"Give me a pretty kiss to take away with me," said Lady Leigh, putting her arm round the little figure and drawing the graceful head on to her breast.

Who would call the Lady Eudora proud and cold now?

As the child lifted her face to give the kisses the beautiful, proud queen of fashion pleaded so earnestly for, Sir Frederic entered the hall. She did not hear his footsteps in her absorption, and so he stood pale, startled, with a strange quivering of his firm mouth, and a suspicious moistening of the keen eyes, an unseen witness to that scene.

"I must go to my nurse now, or she will cry. She loves me when I am good," observed Pearl, gravely, looking up at the sweet face of Lady Leigh with a condescending, trusting glance.

"You will turn again, bo'ful lady?"

"Yes, my darling, I will. Good-bye!"

She stood where the child left her for a few moments, a dazed, bewildered expression on her face. A strange, wild suspicion flashed through her brain, but she put it from her as impossible, and turning, with a weary, half-suppressed sigh, she came face to face with Sir Frederic Gordon.

"Lady Leigh, have you got no farther across my threshold than this?" he said, quietly.

"No, Sir Frederic. Who is that child who calls herself Pearl?" was Lady Leigh's abrupt answer.

Sir Frederic was prepared, and replied, quietly and coldly,—

"Oh, you have been making acquaintance with my little orphan niece. Is she not a little beauty?"

"She is very like you, Sir Frederic," returned Lady Eudora, fixing her eyes searchingly upon his face, but there was nothing in that calm gaze that would help her to unravel the mystery she felt to be connected with that child.

"Are you fond of children that you take such an interest in this one?" he asked, sarcastically. "I should have thought the

lovely Lady Leigh would have feared to trust her beauty to the careless hands of a child!"

"If you will not forgive you might forget," exclaimed Eudora. "Can you let me have no peace?"

"You shall not be so troubled again. I forgot then the courtesy due to my guest; the past I cannot forget if I would, and there is nothing to forgive. You chose your path; I have taken the only one left me."

And with a deep bow he opened a large door on their right, thus putting an end to the conversation.

"Here you are," cried Lady Grafton; "I thought you had forgotten me. Take care, Sir Frederic, what would Gertrude Avonmore say!" and she laughed a bright, cheering laugh that was good to hear from one of her years.

Lady Leigh flushed haughtily, but she turned to the speaker with a graciously cold smile, saying, in that low distinct voice of hers,—

"Sir Frederic and I have only just met in the hall, so do not accuse him of faithlessness to our new beauty!"

"It is Lady Leigh's fault that Sir Frederic is not counted a worshipper at her shrine," he replied, in a significant tone.

The proud, lovely woman turned away to go out with unseeing pain-dimmed eyes at the fair sunlight land. Not for worlds would she let him see the wild passion of sorrow that was sweeping over her in great waves—sorrow and longing that increased with every moment she stayed beneath his roof.

"Sorrows, crown of sorrow, is remembering happier things."

How far distant seemed that time to her now, when earth seemed a perfect Paradise, and all the surroundings set to a tune of sweetest harmony! Now everything seemed jangling discordantly, and she had pulled the fairy castle down with her own hands. Ah! dear Heaven, must her life be always drear and dark?

She raised her head defiantly, while a scornful gleam passed across her pale face, as she listened to his soft, musical laughter. Yes, if brightness and love meant pleading to him. His apparent gaiety galled her pride. Why could not she be gay and careless as she used?

"Eudora, my dear, come here; we want your advice. Sir Frederic is thinking of giving a party. Now I propose a picnic to the Briarley Woods, and a ramble over the ruins of the old castle first. What do you say?" said Lady Grafton.

"I should scarcely like to give my advice, seeing that I am a stranger to Sir Frederic. Now, you have known him since he was a boy, and know his tastes," replied Lady Leigh with a gracious smile, but in a sufficiently indifferent tone to make him bite his lips in his vain endeavour to keep down the flash of wounded pride that rose to his bronzed cheeks.

"Any proposition of yours would surely meet with approval," he said, with a deep bow.

"Well, I think my idea is a good one," remarked Lady Grafton. "You could erect tents out on the lawn and down by the lake. A dance in the open air would be quite a novelty!"

"You will have to take charge of my house for the time being, then," laughed the Baronet. "I should be sure to forget the most important items, and my housekeeper is not accustomed to balls!"

"Oh! I will do that with pleasure," answered the old lady briskly, for she liked nothing better than superintending anything of this kind.

And Lady Leigh stood there, with tightly clasped hands and cold impassive face, listening with apparent interest to the conversation, while thoughts that would have startled the simple-hearted Countess were running riot in her mind.

"I shall expect you to make out the list of invitations!" observed Sir Frederic.

"We must have Gertrude Avonmore," said Lady Leigh, coldly, with a swift glance at the Baronet's grave, handsome face. "Sir Frederic's party would not be complete without her!"

"If you cannot make love to the lips that are dear,

Then make love to the lips that are near," he quoted, a slight smile parting his lips as he read the jealousy in her great dark eyes.

"Sir Frederic, I am shocked! Come, Eudora, we shall be late," said Lady Grafton, rising; and with a sigh of relief Lady Leigh followed her out of the cool apartment, with its gently swaying plants and softly fluttering lace curtains, down the wide steps shining glaringly in the hot sun, and so into the carriage.

"I was coming over to pay my devoirs to-morrow. Shall I do so or—?"

"Oh, come over, by all means, and then we can arrange everything," interrupted the Countess, holding out her hand.

"Then good-bye till to-morrow. Good-bye, Lady Leigh." He held the slender grey-gloved hand a moment, a tender light creeping into his hazel eyes; and then he stepped back with a courtly bow as the carriage turned, and bowed swiftly down the wide, shady avenue.

He did not see the proud beauty gaze wistfully at the hand he had held, then pass it softly and caressingly across her smooth-skinned cheek. He saw only the cold, proud glance of her dark eyes as she haughtily inclined her head, in acknowledgment of his bow. He strode off in the direction of the plantation where none could see his working face, or hear his wild, incoherent words.

"Great Heaven above, how can this end?" he cried, passionately, raising his face to the sky shining so deeply blue through the interlaced boughs of the trees. "I shall break down if I stay on here in constant dread of seeing her, yet too weak to keep from seeking her. As soon as this affair is over I will go away, and take Pearl with me."

A softened, anxious look passed over his face as he uttered these last words, and leaning his back against the gnarled trunk of an old oak, he drooped his head on his breast and thus he remained for some time.

"Have I done right? Oh! I could not give you up, my pet; it would kill me. Eudora, my love, my life! why could you not have had faith?" and he threw up his arms with a gesture of utter despair.

What was the wrong that kept these two apart, loving as they did? Would it never come right? It would seem so, for they were both encompassed by a wall of cruel pride that bid fair to ruin both their lives—pride that must be mistaken pride since both loved with such passionate truth.

"My dear child, why do you behave so distantly to my favourite? Do you not know that he is the catch of the season, and I am sure if you were to give him the slightest encouragement you could be Sir Frederic's wife."

A curious, half-amused, half-pained smile played round the perfect scarlet mouth as Lady Grafton spoke, and the dark eyes mechanically glanced at the massive jewelled ring on her left hand. Ah! Lady Grafton, you do not know the history connected with that ring, or you would not have uttered those words.

"I am not in love with matrimony, dear Lady Grafton. I find my freedom very pleasant," she replied.

Her companion smiled indulgently, as she patted the hand lying so near her. She loved this lovely woman dearly as a daughter, and there were times when she wondered if Eudora had loved unhappily.

"You will fall desperately in love some day. I predict it, and when that time comes I hope Sir Frederic will be your captor," she remarked, as the carriage swept in at the great stone gates of Grafton.

"That is Miss Avonmore, or I am much mistaken," said Lady Leigh, taking no outward heed of the Countess's words.

"It is indeed she," exclaimed Lady Grafton. "Welcome to Grafton, Gertrude," she said smilingly, holding out her hand as the girl came down the steps to greet her. "When did you arrive?"

"Only a short time ago. Are you tired, Lady Leigh?" she asked, turning to her as she ascended the three broad steps.

"No; have you any reason for asking?" returned Lady Endora, with a swift smile.

"Well, yes. I was going to ask you if you would take a walk with me in the grounds," said Gertrude.

"I should like it above all things," and Lady Leigh put the girl's hand on her arm as she turned and waved her hand to their hostess.

They made a fair picture, the two beauties, as they sauntered away; the delicate blue and pink of their morning dresses showing clearly by contrast with the deep green of the trees, under whose shade they were walking.

A calmness came over the passionate heart of the proud woman as she walked along in the soft cool air, listening to Gertrude's animated conversation. The gentle whispering of the "flower-loving gales" among the leaves; the soft lapping of the river against the reeds and fern-strawed banks, all had a soothing effect upon her nerves; and when they retraced their steps and came in sight of the house again, her eyes had lost some of the pain, and the pale lovely face had regained its old calm.

Grafton was a substantial-looking structure, built of grey stone; a regular old-fashioned country seat, with square windows draped in heavy brocade, and stately peacocks strutting about the wide stone terrace, with their gorgeous wings outspread in the golden sunlight. There were large stone cups filled with glowing scarlet geraniums along the terrace, and the windows were bright with rare plants of varied hues.

"Did Lady Grafton say something about a picnic?" asked Gertrude, as they paused at the end of the avenue that faced the town.

"Yes, Sir Frederic Gordon is going to give a grand garden-party, which is to commence with a picnic to the old castle. Of course the picnic is only among ourselves."

"He has invited Lady Grafton and yourself, of course?" said the girl, inquiringly, a feeling of half regret coming over her that they had not arrived there a day before. She would have liked to have seen his home in its quiet.

"And yourself?" replied Lady Leigh, quietly.

"Why, he does not know I am here!" cried Gertrude, in surprise.

"Sir Frederic is not likely to forget the date of your proposed arrival here," said Lady Endora, a trifle coldly.

The millowner's daughter felt the meaning in the other's words, and she stooped and gathered a few strands of feathery grass to hide the flush that rose to her cheeks; and as she thought of his grave, thoughtful face, another flashed before her eyes—a careless, brave, grey-eyed face, that had borne so wistful a look when last she gazed upon it—and the flush faded, giving place to a new pallor. What if that face were white and set in death? if this sun that smiled down so tenderly upon them now, had kissed his pale dead lips but a few hours back!

A shudder shook her frame as she pictured these horrors; and the man whom at home she would never have learned to love became invested with a thousand tender romances in her mind now that he was surrounded by danger.

Bertie Crawford, keep up your courage in that far-off land; heed not the blinding rays of sun gleaming along those vast tracts of sand; there is joy for you in the future, for the heart of the woman you love is slowly travelling across the sea to greet thine.

"Have you heard any news of the war

lately?" she asked, turning abruptly to her companion; and Lady Leigh, who had seen the sudden pallor and the quick shudder, thought that the girl feared Sir Frederic would be sent on active service.

"No," she said, holding out her hand to one of the proud birds that had strutted up to them, though her heart beat quicker as the possibility of this coming to pass came upon her. "Have you any particular reason for asking? You have no friends out there, I hope, Gertrude?" she added.

"I only wanted to know how affairs were, that is all," replied the heiress, evasively; and Lady Endora, watching the tell-tale face, felt that her suspicion must be true.

"Gertrude Avonmore," she said gravely, almost solemnly, "do not be offended at my words, but keep a strict guard over your heart; you are young, and unused to the ways of the world."

The heiress gazed at her for a moment in a little surprise, then she put her hand into the slender white one held out to her. She felt, for the first time, that it was possible to love this woman whom she had always liked, yet feared slightly.

"I would not be offended at words that show your interest in my welfare," she returned; and from that day the rival beauties became firm friends.

#### CHAPTER IV.

A STately grand old pile was Briarley Castle, grand and imposing in its slow decay, as in the days when fair women sat laughing and demurely working at their tapestry in the lofty halls, while handsome cavaliers, in trunks and silken hose, clanked their jewelled swords against their spurred heels, as they made the rooms resound with their hearty laughter over some merry tale.

Great masses of dark ivy covered the walls, and even crept inside some of the rooms and trailed across the rotting floors. From a courtyard on the left-hand side a spiral iron staircase led up to the turreted towers that was yet safe to stand upon.

One side of the castle was completely gone, only the half of a high, round tower was left, with long, narrow slits in the massive walls that showed there had once been rooms there, and the crumbling stone and mortar had collected in a pointed heap, over which moss and weeds had grown, forming a hillock of fair height.

The castle stood down in a valley with green sloping hills all round—a sweet peaceful spot, that accorded with the solemn grandeur of that deserted place. A soft breeze crept up and nestled among the heavy mantle of ivy, whispering to the leaves, like the voice of the departed spirits, in gentle musical cadences that rose and fell with every flutter and motion of the clinging plant.

It was just when the sun was flooding the land with golden radiance, peering into shinks and orannies of the old ruin, creeping slowly along the mossy battlements like a sunny rivulet, shooting in pointed shadows across the grass, and throwing the shadow of the Castle in grotesque massive shapes on the sloping hill-side, that the party from the Court made their appearance upon the summit of a hill that faced the sea.

Sir Frederic Gordon and the heiress led the way, Lady Leigh remaining behind with Mrs. Ventley and Lady Grafton and her lord. Gertrude looked bewilderingly lovely in a rich geranium red satin, draped with fern lace and looped with white flowers; and Lady Leigh's proud heart quivered as she watched Sir Frederic bending so tenderly to catch her words, gazing so admiringly into the lovely changing face.

"What do you think of our old Castle, Lady Leigh?" he asked, as they all stood in the courtyard and gazed through the crumbling walls at the narrow ivy-clad entrance. "Is it not a grand old pile?"

"I never see a ruin but I people it with the

dead inhabitants of days gone by. A strange hush comes over me in the presence of those memories," said Lady Endora, in a low voice, and there was a half dreamy light in the dusky eyes; but catching the grave, searching glance of his keen hazel eyes, she flushed and laughed a slight mocking laugh as she stooped and drew the train of her violet velvet robe from a bush of nettles. "That is the poetry, this is the reality," she added.

"You are right, Lady Leigh, a ruin is a memory. I hate memories, so if Miss Avonmore will honour me with her company I will ascend those stairs and show her the glorious views; there is no past, only a beautiful present to that."

"Will you not come, Lady Leigh?" asked the girl, turning back and gazing almost wildly at the cold face of her friend.

"No thanks, Gertrude, my rhapsodizing days are over. I prefer to stay where my neck is safe," she replied, with a light mischievous laugh that jarred upon Sir Frederic's ears.

"She is heartless," he muttered, "heartless, and a coquette. She thinks so too me back with those indifferent ways, so that she can spurn me from her, but once hit twice shy."

Neither Gertrude or he spoke while they were ascending those frail stairs, and when they arrived at the top there was silence still for a time between them, for Gertrude was speechless with delight. The tower rose above the summit of the hill down which they had come, and they could see the undulating, emerald pastures; the cool glades where sunny sunbeams hid, woods dark and sombre with the light of the sun, just tipping the swaying tops of the tall trees with pale gold; and far, far, in the distance, a broad clear river rippling away in a thousand dashing ripples that broke gently on the grassy banks as the milking boats glided slowly over its surface.

Hark! what is that sound breaking with such soft rhythmical music on the ear. The heiress peered over the high wall of the tower, and saw a wide, clear sheet of water sparkling and glittering in a hundred brilliant columns, as it dashed down the side of the hill at the back of the castle, and added and bubbled among huge boulders of rock that lay at the bottom, then danced away, and lost itself among tall, rustling rushes and bending willows.

"It is lovely!" exclaimed the girl at last, turning to her companion with eyes beaming with delight. "Sir Frederic, this is the best part of your entertainment."

"Your words please me, Miss Avonmore, for I am a lover of nature," he replied.

"Lady Leigh would have been charmed if only she had come up," continued Gertrude.

"Do you think so?" he said, a little sarcastically, and then he added, looking gravely at the girl's beautiful face. "Have you heard from or of Bertie Crawford since he left England?"

He knew she had not, but he felt that this was the best way of commencing a conversation which he wished to have with her on the subject.

"No," she said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, while the colour came and went on her cheeks, and she lifted her violet eyes shyly to his face as she spoke. "Have you?" and there was a little eager catch in the soft low voice that did not escape the observation of the astute soldier.

"I have," he returned; "and he would not take care of you." He did not tell her that Bertie Crawford had written as a man in the midst of death, and begged Sir Frederic not to trifle with her if he meant nothing. "Will you let me be your friend until he comes back to claim his bride?"

A strange feeling of pleasure came over her at his words. Bertie had spoken often to him—had thought of her during all the perils of the war. Ah! if he could know that she did regret him!

"Did he say when there was likely to be any fighting?" she asked, as she put her hand



in his, in token that she accepted his proffered friendship.

"No; a soldier dare not divulge the movements of the army. Ah, Miss Gertrude! I fancy he possesses more of that romantic heart than either the or you suspect." He laughed, and the girl only blushed and glanced away, feeling a trifle awkward as she remembered the romantic fancy she had taken to Sir Frederic himself on first making his acquaintance.

Meanwhile, Lady Eudora Leigh, sitting on the grass, apparently engrossed with admiration of the scenery, saw all the movements of these two on the lofty tower of the old ruin—saw even the expression of their faces when once she raised her glasses to obtain a nearer view of the battlements, the tender, half-protecting glance of his hazel eyes, and the shy, blushing face of the girl as she put her hand to her eye.

"Those two are a long time admiring the view," remarked Mrs. Ventles, who sat beside her, smiling; but if she thought to outwit her the Lady Leigh was disappointed.

Sir Frederic is an enthusiast with regard to nature, and so is Gertrude. They are sure to be good friends," was her calm reply.

"I shall call them if they do not come down now," said Lady Grafton; but even as she spoke Sir Frederic and Miss Avonmore were descending, with many a pause and laugh, the wall, quivering staircase, and in a few moments were crossing the brick-strewn ground that led to the grassy hillock on which they were seated.

"Well, my boy," laughed Lord Grafton, "you look as though you had been enjoying yourself up there."

"It is really lovely!" exclaimed Sir Frederic, glancing at the sweet face of the young heiress as he spoke.

Lady Leigh, who had risen, standing a little back from the rest, now turned, and glancing first at the girl, then at the Baronet, said in a low, soft tone that only he heard,—

"I agree with you, Sir Frederic; beware how you catch it. You have raised twelves; let not the wreck of another lie upon your head!"

And she moved away in stately disregard of his gesture of disavowal. He gazed after her as she walked slowly along, her long, velvet robe showing every line of the superb figure, and trailing in snake-like folds across the dark grass.

"Poor that I am! I will pluck all thought of her out of my life. I will not stoop to deny the lie. Let her still believe it if she can," muttered a dark, passionate frown knitting his brows, that made Gertrude wonder as she walked silently by his side, for she knew nothing of what had just passed.

A few hours later Sir Frederic stood on the immense lawn at Briarley Court courteously greeting his guests; they had nearly all arrived, and from the gay tents there issued sweet sounds of music, while the merry ring of laughter filled the air; bright dresses and gleaming jewels flashed among the many tall plants; the whole presented a picture of aristocratic abandon.

Lawn tennis, croquet, archery competitions, and boating on the placid lake were among the many pleasures of the afternoon.

There was to be no formal dinner; supper was laid in a large tent for ten o'clock, while for those who desired refreshment meanwhile had been furnished a buffet, with every delicacy that wealth can imagine.

The afternoon waned, and just as the grey twilight faded into darkness, bright lamps sent forth a rosy light from amongst the fluttering leaves of the trees where they were hidden, and the band in one of the largest marquees commenced the opening bars of "Dream Faces."

Sir Frederic, forgetting his determination of the morning, turned to Lady Leigh, who was sitting on a lounge near, and said,—

"Will you dance the first waltz with me?"

Over the beautiful face swept a red flush—a flush that brought to his mind all the past, and made his manner colder to her, for he thought it was a flush of triumph, but he did not see the tender, wistful passion in the veiled eyes, and her tremulous reply he set down as superb acting.

The dance over, they passed out of the marquee into the starlit night, where no sound save the soft rustling of the trees could be heard; and as they stood alone in the dim, rose-light thrown by the lamps, the soft rush of a child's feet was heard, and next moment little Pearl was clinging round the tall, slender woman robed in violet velvet with bright, flashing diamonds, gleaming among her dark hair, and rising and falling on her bosom with each breath.

"Papa, why should I not come? I am very good. I will see the beautiful lady," said the child, with pretty, shy willingness, as she raised her lovely face to receive Eudora's caress.

"You have remembered me, then?" she said, stooping, and taking the child's hand.

Sir Frederic stood immovable, his features working strangely as he watched those two looked in a close embrace—the woman whom he had loved in the past if he did not love her now, and the child who bore so strange a resemblance to himself.

"I never forget you. I want you to live here. If you are tired to papa he will let you, won't you, eh, papa?" said Pearl, in her innocent baby way, lifting those large, serious eyes to his face.

A rush of old recollections came over the proud woman, bowing her spirit to the earth, and she turned passionately to the Baronet with clasped, pleading hands, and dark, pain-drawn eyes.

"Fred, Fred!" she cried; "are Pearl's words true?"

Sir Frederic staggered back, as though he had received a blow; another moment and all would have been well with these two, but the sound of gay, laughing voices broke upon their ears, and a party of young people made their appearance.

"We have been on the lake, gathering lilies by moonlight, Sir Frederic!" cried one young girl, holding up a bunch of golden and white lilies for his inspection. "Are they not lovely?"

He drew a deep breath as he thought how he had nearly given way. It was best thus. She had failed him in the past, and was, therefore, likely to fail again. Besides, how was he to know? She was, perhaps, only carried away by the passion of the moment, and might even now be congratulating herself on her escape. It would seem so, for she was laughing in her cold, haughty way with some young girls and their admirers, having, to all outward seeming, entirely forgotten his existence.

Sir Frederic did not remember, or chose to ignore the fact, that he, too, had appeared affected a moment before, and that now he was entering into all their nonsense with apparent zest; and so, with all a man's inconsistency, he told himself it was well, that his determination to pluck her from his heart was best.

Pearl kept near the Lady Leigh, and would not consent to go to bed till she herself carried her into the house. Several of the guests saw the proud woman bearing her lovely burthen, and marvelled. There were some who hinted that she was angling for the lands and possessions of Pearl's uncle; but Sir Frederic, who overheard these remarks, only smiled scornfully to himself.

His mind was in a strange turmoil of doubt and love. He felt that his heart still belonged to her, but he feared to trust her again, and, in his weakness, he determined to leave the Court and go out to the war. He knew he had only to ask to have his request granted, and, as he moved among his guests that night, with the sound of music filling the perfumed

air, and the soft, mellow light of the moon flooding the earth, there was a slight, sad gravity in his manner that many remembered a week later and understood.

As he bade Lady Leigh good-bye, he gazed long and earnestly into her dark-eyed, pale face. She did not know that he was taking his last look, that those grave eyes were bidding her a silent farewell. She only felt the tight pressure of his hand; and a thrill of sweet hope touched the long silent chords of her soul, and rose to Heaven in a flood of joyous melody, though none heard.

The man's passionate heart was overwhelmed with memories of what this woman had been to him in the past, and he stepped back quickly, bowing as the carriage swept away, and a cry that he could not stifle went up on the still air—a cry for strength to bear his cross, for courage to play his part in the tragedy of life.

The laughing, merry guests—as they drove home in the moonlight, or sat in their boudoirs or smoking-rooms, according to their sex—would have been startled not a little could they have seen the man lying prone on the dew-wet grass, wrestling with his love and pride.

## CHAPTER V.

A party call was made upon the lord of the vast domain of Briarley on the following day, and when Lady Leigh and Miss Avonmore stood side by side in the avenue of Grafton a few hours later, the girl turned to her suddenly, saying,—

"Sir Frederic seemed disappointed at not seeing you, Lady Eudora. Indeed he was, I am sure," she added, with great emphasis, for the proud chivalled lips curled scornfully.

"My dear Gertrude, you are but a child in the ways of the world yet," she replied, with a cold smile. "Sir Frederic Gordon could scarcely refrain from expressing regrets. It would have been positively rude had he not done so."

But she wondered, with a quick, heavy throb at her heart if he was sorry not to see her.

"I am going to write some letters home before dinner," observed the heiress, a short time after, breaking a pause that was becoming irksome.

"And I also must write letters, but I have no home such as you mean, Gertrude, to send them to," said the proud queen of fashion, sadly, as she entered the wide, lofty hall, where in the deep shadows of several niches stood the grim forms of armoured warriors.

Dinner was over, and the guests at Grafton were assembled in the drawing-room, some flirting in corners, looking slyly up from the shadow of their large fans, some standing sentimentally gazing at the moonlit landscape, which looked, indeed, fair enough to draw romance from the coldest and most practical brain.

Lady Leigh was seated at the piano surrounded by a group of admiring listeners. She had just finished the last verses of "The Charge of the Light Brigade," when Colonel Crawford, who was among the guest, bent forward, and said,—

"By-the-by, Lady Leigh, did you go over to Briarley Court this morning?"

"No," she replied briefly, touching the keys lightly with her slender finger.

"Then you won't see Sir Frederic Gordon for many a long day; if, indeed, he ever comes back again," he said gravely.

Many there were startled by the strange pallor that overspread the lovely statuesque face; and the look of imploring sorrow in the large misty eyes, as she raised them to his face, came as an awful revelation to the Colonel. Had this fair, proud, queenly woman given her love unsought?

The hands that a moment before had elicited such sweet melody from the white keys now fell with a crash upon them, sending forth such a noise of discord that it roused her.



["DO YOU THINK BERTIE WILL ESCAPE?" ASKED GERTRUDE, RAISING HER WISTFUL EYES TO THE COLONEL.]

"You quite startled me, Crawford!" she remarked, striking a few bars of "When other lips and other hearts." "You speak as though he had gone to his death."

"Perhaps he has, Lady Leigh. Have you not seen this evening's paper? It is announced that Sir Frederic Gordon goes on in command of this new expedition."

"I have not seen the paper," she replied slowly, "When does he start?"

She had risen from the music stool and stood calm, erect, but none the less interested, as those who stood about her saw, and not a few admired her woman's pride, while they grieved for her sorrow.

"This week!" he said.

"So soon?" She spoke the words quietly and steadily, but not in her usual clear tones. There was a strange new hushiness in her voice, and her eyes were dark as midnight, as she turned to those about her with her old graceful smile, saying, "I see Gertie Avonmore is alone, and I wish to speak to her."

The men who had stood listening in rapt pleasure to the ravishing voice, as it rang out with such thrilling passion, turned now and gazed after the stately figure in scarlet satin and black lace, as it wended its way across the long room to a window overlooking a fruit orchard, where Gertrude Avonmore sat alone; and a sad regret stole into some hearts as it came home to them, how this woman, whom the world deemed cold and heartless, could love; and they felt that it could never be theirs, this love that would be the beginning and the end of life with her.

"Is it not a lovely night, Lady Leigh? I can scarcely realise, as I sit here watching the swaying shadows on the moonlit grass, and listening to the murmur of the breeze through the leaves, that in that far-away country there are sounds of strife for ever filling the air, cold, white faces upturned to the sky," and the girl shuddered.

"Do you know that Sir Frederic Gordon is

going out?" asked Lady Leigh, as she seated herself by the heiress's side.

"No, when did you hear of it, Lady Eudora?" she exclaimed.

"Colonel Crawford has just told me that he starts this week," replied the low, sad voice. At that moment the Colonel came up to where they were seated, and began discussing the chances of Gordon to the two girls, who had been listening to the rush of the night winds among the trees, and watching the fitful shadows cast on the silvered grounds as the trees swayed gently backwards and forwards.

The sweet perfume of the fruit in the orchard crept in delicious puffs through the open window, mingling with the subtle odour of the camellias that were ranged tier upon tier in the embrasured window.

"Do you think Bertie will escape?" asked Gertrude, raising her wistful violet eyes to the Colonel.

"Who?" said Lady Leigh, with a start, as the Colonel moved away, after expressing a hope in the affirmative.

"Bertie Crawford," repeated the girl, in a low tone, blushing deeply, as she met the earnest glance of those dark orbs.

"Is it so, Gertie? You never told me!" she said gently.

"He did not ask me, Lady Leigh. He thinks I did not love him, but he wrote and asked Sir Frederic to be my friend and take care of me till he returns, and Sir Frederic promised!"

A great wave of joy swept over the proud soul. He had not tried to win this innocent heart. She had misjudged him, and perhaps she had driven him to this step by her coldness. Oh, Heaven! was she doomed to wreck her life by her own hand?

"You will only have me now, Gertie!" she said, half inquiringly. "You guess my secret, I see, by your speaking eyes. We will comfort each other, eh, dear?"

The proud woman was very humble in this new sorrow that had come upon her. She did

not blame him; she felt that it was her own fault; and now that it was too late she felt would suffer anything to possess his love and trust, aye, even plead to him for it; but this feeling had come too late. Sir Frederic had left the Court that morning, taking the little Pearl with him.

"Only you!" and she put her hand into that held out to her.

"Do not look so sad, Gertie; your love will end happily," and she drew a deep breath.

"I wish I could think so, dear Lady Leigh. But whenever I picture his face, it is still and white in death, and I can see the heaps of dead, with their glassy eyes turned to the blue sky and the birds flying above. Oh! it is horrible!"

"Gertie, you must not give way like this; it is wicked," returned her companion, gravely; "but she sympathised with and understood the feelings of the gentle, loving girl."

They parted that night with a quiet, grave caress. There was a tie between them that bound them together in a close firm, friendship. And so the days passed on, and then, one morning, Gertrude came to Lady Leigh with pale face and horror-stricken eyes, telling her, in accents so fraught with pain that the tears started to her eyes, that Bertie was wounded. He had led his men on and completely routed the enemy, gaining for himself the Victoria Cross by the daring of his venture, but receiving a wound that bid fair to quench his brave life as he knew what his country felt—how the country was ringing with his praise.

"I have written to papa to tell him that I am going to Egypt," said the girl, in firm tones. "Will you come with me, Lady Leigh?"

A half-startled expression stole across the perfect face; then she put out her hand, as though pushing some thought from her.

"Yes, I will, Gertie," she replied, simply.

(Continued on page 373.)





[HE GRIPPED HER ROUGHLY BY THE SHOULDER, AND HER KNEES KNOCKED TOGETHER AS SHE RECOGNISED GEORG.]

## THE HEIRESS OF BEAUDESERT.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

#### FOUND!

WHEN Verreker was struck down by a cowardly blow at the back of his head the mob thought he was dead, and, anxious to avoid unpleasant inquiries, took to its heels.

In an incredibly short space of time the street was cleared, except for that inanimate form, which kept silent possession of rather more than six feet length of pavement. There it lay, forgotten and deserted, without the strength to defend itself, yet mighty in its powerlessness.

They had gathered round him with sufficient audacity when he had stood up against them, and answered blow for blow; but now that the right hand had no more strength than a babe's, now that the watchful eye was closed, there was not one of them that dared to touch him, or even to be found within a few yards of his body!

Flies came and rested unmolested on the perfect features which some women had loved too well, and noisome insects who haunted the filthy gutter crawled back from its reeking streamlet to wander at will over this new domain.

A beetle, who looked black enough to be the sexton of his tribe, crawled up the helpless right hand lying prone on the cold stones, and had just made its way from the sleeve to the shoulder, from the shoulder to the face, when a door opened gently, and a shabby dress came out with a woman's kind heart within it. A few German coins thrown into her lap by a generous hand had not been forgotten, and the remembrance had brought Frau Schmidt out on an errand of charity, although it was as likely as not to bring down on her the displeasure of her neighbours.

She could not let him die if it was in her

power to prevent it, for he was the only creature who had ever done her a kindness during the past miserable year.

She raised the heavy head, and placed a wet rag on his forehead, then waited patiently for some sign of life. A fierce anger was smouldering in her breast meanwhile, and some of it was vented on the beetle, which was crushed as a heavy punishment for trespassing.

"Why couldn't they let this one be? The only one amongst 'em all who had a spark of Christian charity, the only one who cared a bit if the children starved. Ah, you may jeer at me!" addressing a neighbour in a shrill tone. "But I tell you, if you wanted to do for any of them why didn't you take the fine gentleman? He hadn't a thought for me, though he was taking the bread out of my mouth."

"It wasn't me, I had nothing to do with it; but that cowardly Georg, who couldn't fight fair—must have at him out of the window. If he's done a good turn to any of us poor folk I don't mind lending you a hand," and shutting the window with a bang, the woman presently emerged from her front door. "He's a fine strapping fellow," looking down on the prostrate body, "and looks as if he had never done a day's work in his life. See, there's a ring on his little finger!"

"A gift from his sweetheart, no doubt. He's not old enough to pawn it yet," with a sigh, which showed where her own small properties had gone; "but he's coming to," as Verreker opened his eyes, and looked up into her face with a wondering stare.

Perhaps in her youth she had had a lover with sun-bright hair and eyes like the heavens, for the hard lines seemed to vanish from round her mouth, and the lips tried to remember how to smile as she bent over him.

"Feel better now? Do you think you could move if we gave you a hand?"

His answer was to raise himself into a sitting posture, look vaguely round, and try to scramble to his feet; but his legs failed him miserably, and he would have lost his balance if

the two women had not clawed hold of him just in time.

One window opened after another, and rough heads appeared at most, whilst from some came a volley of oaths or coarse sarcasms. But the two women were too accustomed to such civilities to mind them, and for once were so much interested in the business in hand that they actually held their tongues.

By dint of some exertion they managed to get Verreker upstairs, where he was laid flat on the floor, because even then in his dilapidated condition of body and mind he shrank away with abhorrence from the idea of lying on Sleeman's bed.

"We ought to give him something," said Frau Braun, contemplating the patient with her hands on her hips; "but it's rather hard when we've nothing to give," and she laughed shortly. "I must be off, or I shall catch it; but mind if he dies you don't let anyone but me help you. You know how we might earn a bit of money that way," and with a good-natured nod she went out of the room, and her wooden shoes clattered down the stairs.

"I've got a drop of milk," mused Frau Schmidt, "if the little ones haven't drunk it. Maybe he could take that, and they might make shift with water, as they've often done before."

She went away to fetch it, but was some time about it, as the children did not see the advantage of giving it up to a stranger. They were dirty, untidy little things, with almost colourless hair, and large blue eyes, but they might have been pretty if they had not looked half-starved, and wholly miserable.

The one boy and two girls stamped and cried, but instead of giving way to them as usual Frau Schmidt, for once in her life, resisted, stuck to her point, and carried off the basin.

"You shall have some more, my pretties," she said soothingly, as she clapped the youngest on a chair; and then she backed out of the door, the others making frantic clutches at her skirt.

Verreker seemed to be asleep, so she set the basin by his side on the floor, put the small oil lamp on the chair behind his head, so that the light might not get into his eyes, and then went back to quiet her children, who had begun to thump frantically at the door, after the manner of little misers who are wanted to be quiet.

Rex was not asleep, only suffering from excessive languor, which made it seem impossible to do anything but rest and be still. It was too much trouble even to raise his eyes when Frau Schmidt came into the room. He would thank her presently, when his head felt less heavy. So there he lay, perfectly still, only the heaving of his chest showing that he was alive.

There were two eyes watching him, although he did not know it, and always travelling backwards and forwards between his face and the basin of milk.

Presently the white cat, no longer able to resist temptation, stole from her position against the wainscot, and furtively crept under the bed; then with a glance over her shoulder, as if her conscience pinched her, she made a spring forward, and stopped her head eagerly over the edge of the basin.

Roused by the slight noise of tapping, Rex opened his eyes, and let them wander vaguely round the room. The light of the lamp from its lofty position on the chair cast long rays across the floor right under the bed, which was pulled outwards to the middle of the room.

The cat went on tapping in a state of ecstatic enjoyment; at first, with an evident sense of responsibility, she lifted her head from time to time with the intention of combining a fulfilment of her duty with her enjoyment of a sin, which is often to be seen in human beings; but after a time, as is too often the case, indulgence led to forgetfulness, and nothing was remembered but the wish to clear out Frau Schmidt's last drop of milk out of the basin.

Whilst she was thus employed Verreker kept his eyes open, for he had a natural antipathy to cats, and could not get over the idea that when the milk was finished she would try to scratch his face.

After looking about vaguely, his eyes fixed themselves on the spot where the cat had taken up her position as soon as the policeman entered the room. Could there be two cats instead of one? He rubbed his eyes and looked again. There was certainly something white close against the wainscot, but it could not be either cat or kitten, for it was quite flat.

"What does it matter?" he said to himself drowsily, but instinct or a special providence made him look again. He raised his head an inch or two, so as to get a better view. It was one or two folded sheets of paper—probably something that Sleeman had left.

Suddenly, like an electric flash, it shot through his mind that he had come there to find the lost despatches—they had not been found because the cat had been trained to hide them. They were here close within reach—he had nothing to do but to get them!

Every pulse throbbed; his temples beat as if they would burst—the dew gathered on his forehead! He rolled, or crawled along the floor, and stretched out a hand that shook like a girl's.

As his fingers felt the foolscap, and a deep breath that was merely a sob of joy escaped him, there was a loud hiss, and the cat with a spring came across the room, and seized the paper in her teeth. At that moment Verreker would scarcely have had pity on a babe that offered to destroy his treasure.

He caught her sternly by the throat till the papers dropped from her jaws; then he let her go, and held them to his breast, his hand in a whirl, his heart beating fast, his limbs shaking as he leant for support against the wall.

It was thus that Lord Daintree found him. When, thanks to Countess Marie de Ravigny, he at last appeared upon the scene, Verreker put the despatches into his hand, and told him to run with them at once.

"For Heaven's sake, be quick—it is life or death to me. Sir Barnabas will see to them."

"Where did they come from?" cried the Marquis, in amazement. "We looked all over the place before."

"Yes, I know," in a fever of impatience, with his hand to his aching head. "The cat had got them, and I've killed her. Go, for Heaven's sake!"

"But I don't like to leave you," looking at him anxiously. "Get back to your pillow, at any rate."

"Yes—yes, when you've gone," answering to Frau Schmidt, who was a bewildered witness of the scene.

"Oh, go—go!" frowning with pain and impatience.

"I'm off. You keep watch till I come back," to the landlady, who he slipped a gold piece into her hand, and hurried away.

The poor thing had not seen a piece of gold for such a long time that she burst into tears, but she soon dried them on her apron. With her help Verreker managed to get back to his pillow, and lay quite quiet, overpowered by the throbbing in his head.

The shock of intense joy coming after the severe blow on the back of his head was too much for him, and every nerve and pulse was quivering. Odd fancies came into his brain—one moment he mixed up Sleeman with his out, and thought he had got him by the throat, and was threatening to throttle him if he would not give up the despatches—the next he was at Beaudesert. The light of the policeman's lantern he took for the sun, and Countess Marie became Lady Valérie.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### NOTHING TO EAT.

"SEND one of your men for my carriage, if you please," said Countess Marie de Ravigny, as the policeman knelt down and began to bandage Verreker's head in a way that showed he was accustomed to that sort of work.

"Excuse me, madame, but there is no room for a carriage to turn, and it is out of the question for you to drive the whole length of this disreputable street."

"Allow me to judge of that," with a touch of haughtiness. "I am perfectly certain that no one will dare to annoy me."

He got up from his knees, his task being completed, and came close to her.

"This is one of the gentlemen from the British Embassy. I know his face well," he said, lowering his voice. "If he is very particular about his identity not being discovered, it is the worst plan possible to take him to his own lodgings."

"I don't know anything about it," feeling very much puzzled and embarrassed; "but I think we must chance it."

The policeman reflected.

"It would take too long to send for his own clothes."

The Countess pulled out her jewelled watch.

"Yes, I haven't wait any longer—my father will be wondering where I am."

"You have to consider, madame, what a scandal it would create for you to be seen conveying a carpenter to Herr Verreker's lodgings, and how many damaging stories will circulate in consequence."

"Nobody will know, and nobody will see, so it won't matter," she said, impatiently.

"Everything is seen, and everything is known," he said, firmly but respectfully, "and I have to move carefully in this matter, because there are many interests involved."

Then he looked over her shoulder at the door, for it had opened, and Mirah stood hesitatingly on the threshold with a bundle under his arm, not liking the look of the police force, yet anxious to do Verreker a service if he could.

"Is—there a carpenter here?" he asked, in some confusion.

"Yes," said the policeman, stepping briskly

forward, "What do you want with him?" adding, in an undertone, "we know all about Herr Verreker."

Mirah looked relieved, for not knowing if Rex would care to be discovered, he had felt tongue-tied.

"I went to his house, but he wasn't there, so I came on here, thinking he might be hiding somewhere abouts, and waiting for his things. Here they are; but good heavens! catching a glimpse of him lying on the floor, 'he is not dead! they can't have killed him!'"

"No, but he's not as well as he might be. If madame will kindly leave us, we will arrange his dress," looking at the Countess.

"It may do him harm," she suggested anxiously.

The policeman shrugged his shoulders, thinking to himself,—

"What a bother women are when there's anything to do with their sweethearts." Aloud he said drily, "Really, madame must leave the gentlemen in our hands."

Then she bowed, afraid of saying more, and followed Frau Schmidt into the next room, Anna in a mystified frame of mind, keeping close to her heels.

The children stared at the strangers, and retired, sliding behind each other into the corner, whilst their mother dressed a chair, and offered it to the Countess, presently finding another with one leg missing for the maid.

Anna turned up her nose, and regarded the miserable room with a disdainful air, mentally resolving that she never would come into such a beggar's hole again, whilst her mistress looked round with a heart full of pity, promising herself the pleasure of bringing mere comfort into the shabby home as soon as she could.

She called the children to her, but they would not come, and accustomed to ill-treatment from all but their mother, the three began to cry.

"Hold your tongues now, you unmannerly brats. Don't you know a real lady when you see one? Bertha, make a bow; Rose, put down your frock," on which she was engaged in wiping her tears. "Franz, be a man, and tell the lady you are glad to see her."

"Has she brought us anything to eat?" asked Franz gravely, thinking that could be the only reason why he should be expected to be pleased at her visit.

The mother scolded him, but the Countess said pitifully,—

"Poor child, are you hungry? Haven't you had enough to eat?"

"I've had a bit of bread," sullenly, as he remembered his wrongs; "and I should have had some milk, only mother took it away for somebody else."

"The gentlemen in the next room wanted it," said his mother, reprovingly, "and he was ill."

"You shall have some more milk, and something very good to eat, poor child," and Marie felt for her purse. Her great anxiety being over, she began to remember her own appetite for her lost dinner, and she wondered what she would have felt like if she had eaten nothing all day but a scrap of bread.

"Can't you go and fetch them something at once, or the shops will be shut up?" pouring more than half the contents of her purse into Frau Schmidt's hand.

She drew back, red and confused.

"No, no, miladi; the gentleman gave me something, and so did the other. I thought I should starve this afternoon, but to-night I am rich. Indeed—indeed—I can do without," and the tears gushed forth from her eyes.

"But I can't do without giving it—it is such a pleasure," with a pleading smile. "I only wish I had known of you before. They tell me at home that all that want work can get it, so how is it that you are so poor?"

"It's not true, miladi," shaking her head sorrowfully. "I've tried a hundred times or more and I couldn't get it, and all because I live in a street that has a bad name. I can't afford to move, so I suppose it will always be



the same, and what will become of the poor children I can't tell."

"Perhaps I can," said the Countess, softly. "You will move next week into a lodging in quite a different part of the town. Your children will look rosy and well, because they will have enough to eat, and they won't cry when they see a stranger," smiling at the shy little group in the corner, "because they will be taught at school to know better."

"But how, madame?" looking breathlessly from the impassive face of the maid to the eager one of her mistress. "Nothing but a miracle could do it."

"Then the miracle will have to happen," with a cheerful smile. "Tell me, have you a husband living?"

Tears fell fast down the woman's thin cheeks.

"No, he was run down and killed by a mail-cart. It was in the summer; we weren't so badly off then, and he had promised me a holiday in the fields. I can see him now going out of the door with a smile on his face—Franz will be just the image of him when he's a bit fatter—and the next I saw of him was being brought in on a shutter. It regular knocked me down. I had the fever, and what with no money coming in and the expenses of the burial and my illness, I never picked up again. But why should I trouble a lady with all this? You've never felt what it is to have little hands stretched out for bread, and not a bit to give them."

"No, and pray Heaven I never may," with a shudder of true sympathy. "How was it that—that the gentleman who was hurt came to be brought here?"

"Because they had a fight to get the prisoner away, and 'cause they couldn't touch the police, they caught hold of this young man. He fought splendidly, and not one of 'em could match him, till Georg, next door, opened the window and gave him a crack at the back of his head. No sooner was he down than they all ran away, and I thought for sure and certain he was dead; but after a time I just went out to see, and me and a neighbour, Frau Braun, got him on to his feet between us, and so helped him in."

"Then you did us all a great service," the tears shining in her eyes as she stretched out her hand impulsively, "and may Heaven reward you!"

Frau Schmidt looked surprised, and her lip trembled. "Madame is too good. I did nothing—nothing at all."

"There is some one coming," said Anna, who was tired of sitting still and holding her tongue. "Shall I go and see who it is, madame?"

Before she reached the door it opened, and the policeman bowed stiffly.

"We are ready. It is for madame to tell us if she persists in taking the gentleman in her own carriage?"

Marie de Ruigny bent her head in assent. The man bit his lip, evidently much annoyed.

"You will remember, madame, that it was against my advice, and if anything happens I decline to be responsible."

The colour rushed to her face, and then left it pale as death. What did he expect to happen? She waited for an instant to steady her voice.

"Do you mean," she said, slowly, "that he is so ill that—that—"

"I mean," he interrupted, brusquely, "with an attack of brain fever imminent, a lady and her maid are scarcely the people a sensible man would choose to take care of a patient."

"Then take him yourself, but in my carriage—it will be so much more comfortable," looking up into his stern face, with sudden pleading in her own.

"If madame wishes it; but what will she do herself?"

"Oh, never mind about me. Somebody shall fetch me a droshky," with her usual unselfishness.

The policeman bowed and departed. He was not so callous as he seemed, for nothing

would induce him to leave the Countess in that house at the mercy of the populace, who were probably infuriated by this time at the sight of the police force in their midst.

Already a number of people had assembled, who watched the proceedings with jealous eyes, and stood about ready for mischief, but afraid of indulging in it so long as the detachment stayed.

Countess Marie was shown into the droshky, her maid took her place opposite to her on the back seat, whilst Joseph seated himself beside the coachman. Her last glance was given not to the angry crowd, but up at the windows of the room where she had left Rex Verreker.

Two minutes later he was driven away in Count de Ruigny's carriage, murmuring confusedly about lost despatches and Lady Valerie, and Frau Schmidt had just shut her front-door, hoping for no more visitors that night, when there came a thundering knock!

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE WHITE CAT.

FRAU SCHMIDT was not a coward, but a lone woman might be forgiven for being nervous, with a crowd outside who were likely to have disapproved of her late doings, and only a rickety front door between herself and their violence. Instead of answering it, she gathered her children round her and trembled.

She had meant to hurry out and get them some food, but now she was glad she had not gone, for she might have come back to find them murdered. She pressed them to her bosom, and wondered how much longer the door would stand those vigorous knocks.

"Go to the door," said little Franz, who was terribly hungry; "perhaps it's the lady come to give us something to eat. She said we weren't to be thin any more. Be quick, mother, be quick!"

Curiosity as well as her son's entreaties drew her into the front-room. She opened the window and put out her head, calling out, in a voice querulous with agitation,—

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for persecuting a poor widow. I've done nothing to harm you, so get along with you."

"My good woman, you are quite mistaken," said a voice, which she instantly recognised as that of a gentleman. "I've no bad intentions towards you. I've brought a doctor to see a sick man."

She vanished from the window at once, and reappeared at the door, quite shocked at having kept the strangers waiting. She begged them to walk in, but told them in the same breath that the young man had been taken away in the lady's carriage, under charge of the police.

Lord Daintree looked much annoyed. "You don't know where he was taken?"

"The policeman seemed much put about because the lady wished to have him, but I think she gave way at last, so they took him to the hospital."

"The hospital!" inquired Dr. Jones, an English doctor, who was practising in Vienna, "pray which hospital do you mean?"

"That's more than I can tell, for I never heard the name."

"What are we to do?" asked the Marquis.

"It is a long way to the police-station—but it will be better than going the round of the hospitals. As there were no limbs broken I wonder that they didn't take him to his own lodgings."

"They took care to dress him like a gentleman before he left," put in Frau Schmidt, looking from one to the other with curious eyes.

"How absurd! As if that mattered!" exclaimed Lord Daintree, in disgust.

"I think it was to please the lady."

"Then, depend upon it, he's at De Ruigny's. Let us go there at once."

They drove off at a rapid pace in the direction of the Count's splendid house, and as soon as their carriage was out of sight Frau Braun appeared on her door-step.

"Well I never! You'll soon be too grand to

live alongside of such as us. What did those swells want, poking their noses, where they were not wanted?"

"It wasn't a swell, but a doctor, and I fancy you'd have wanted him fast enough if you had been lying half-dead on the floor."

"I didn't know he was a doctor," eagerly.

"Did he give you anything?"

"No, but the lady did, and I wanted just to step round the corner, and get a bit of food for the children. They've had nothing inside them all day but a crust."

"You ran before the shops are shut-up, and I'll keep an eye on them," busting across the road, willing to be of service to her neighbour, but also intending to have a share in the good things when Frau Schmidt came back.

After a few minutes spent in tidying herself up, Frau Schmidt came hurriedly out of her door, shut it with a bang behind her, and ran down the street. But however fast she went a man who had watched her went faster still, and stopped her just before she reached the corner.

He gripped her roughly by the shoulder, and her knees knocked together, as she recognised Georg by the light of a lamp.

"You split on me," he said, menacingly; "and I'll wring your brain's necks. They couldn't say anyhow that it was more than manslaughter, so I should be sure to come back some time, and whenever I came back I'd do it; just you remember that!" holding his fist threateningly before her face.

"Are you mad?" she gasped, her very lips whitening as she thought of her little ones, "I'm not the one to do ill to a neighbour, and I can hold my own tongue—only let me go."

"I don't want to keep you," with a jeering laugh. "You need to be a nice enough sort of body once, but now you are too thick with the police to please me."

"Thick with them!" she cried indignantly. "When they've took away my lodger, that paid me regular!"

"Ay, and who split on your lodger, and played the sneak but that pal of yours the carpenter!" with a malicious look.

She started.

"I don't believe a word of it."

"Then why did he come in sneaking as if he was a workman, no better than any of us? And why did he go away dressed like a gentleman in good broadcloth, and in a fine carriage? I didn't see it myself, but there was others that did."

"It's all a puzzle; but there was no harm in him," and drawing her shawl over her chest she hastened round the corner.

Georg broke into a mocking laugh. It followed her as she went hurrying on through the cold night air, and strengthened her purpose of getting away from him as soon as she could.

The lady had talked of lodgings in some other part of the town; and, perhaps, away from the filth and misery of the street in which her lot had been cast, there might be a better life in store for herself and her children.

A quarter of an hour later she returned home, her arms laden with fresh bread, a couple of large sausages about half a yard long, a packet of coffee, a tin of milk, and a pound of sugar.

After something very like starvation this was a regal feast, and Frau Braun was asked to share it, to her own great satisfaction.

The children's eyes grew bright, and a slight colour came into their wan little cheeks after a steaming cup of coffee.

"Oh, mother!" said Franz, as well as he could speak, with a large piece of sausage in his mouth, "I think that lady must be the Empress, or she couldn't have given us all these things."

"Ay, neighbour, who was she?" asked Frau Braun, her curiosity growing now that her hunger was appeased.

"A very grand lady, that's all I know, and a very kind one, bless her heart!" lifting little Rose in her arms to prepare her for bed.

"It's not true that there isn't any good amongst the great folk; only it always seems as if they drove so fast in their carriages that they could not see the misery they passed by."

"Of course you are bound to stick up for them," and Frau Braun laughed, as she wiped her mouth on her apron, and took up her coffee-pot which she had lent for the occasion. "I'd stick up for anyone who gave me such good sausages as those. Good-night! I'll come again as soon as you have such another nice supper to offer me."

Frau Schmidt took up the lamp to light her friend down the stairs, and as soon as she had shut the door went into the front room to see if she had closed the window. The room had a cold, desolate air, with no fire in the stove, the disordered bed, the blind flapping in the wind, the dead body of the cat stretched out upon the floor.

With a shiver she shut down the window and hurried away, glad to get back to her children. She wondered at the nervous horror with which she was possessed, reproving herself sharply; for surely a child could not be so utterly silly as to be frightened of the dead body of a cat, and ill-tempered enough so long as it had the power of hissing and scratching.

Nobody had liked it except the hunchback, and he seemed to be wonderfully partial to it, taking it to sleep with him in bed, and feeding it always in the morning before he would touch a taste of his own breakfast. He used to boast that Afra was the cleverest animal in the world, and much more useful to him than any servant with two legs.

"Poor man! he would be right sorry for the little beast," said the kind-hearted woman to herself, as she lay down on her wretched bed, and felt as happy as a mythological queen, because there was a chance of her children being kept from starvation.

Bertha Schmidt's virtues had been frozen up by the bitter frost of adversity, and only yesterday she had seemed to her neighbours a sour, discontented woman, with a sharp tongue, and a querulous temper. But one gleam of sunshine melted the frost, and she went to rest with a thankful-looking forward to a happier to-morrow.

She dreamt that Bertha had gone to school and won a splendid prize, a prize of a golden cat, with emerald eyes; that Rose had got a lovely new frock of stuff as thick and warm as a blanket—a ground of dark blue, with white cats embroidered all over it; that Franz was a lady's page, holding her umbrella and her prayer-book when she went to church.

On the prayer-book there was a large cross, and on the handle of the umbrella there was a tiny cat in ivory.

As she looked at it the cat grew and grew until it was a great deal too large to stand on the handle of an umbrella, and it had just joined its four feet together ready for a spring, which filled her with unaccountable terror, when she woke up with hands outstretched to keep it from her, her heart beating fast, and a cold dew upon her forehead.

She laid her head down again, inclined to consign every cat in the world to perdition, when she suddenly heard a miaow. Now a miaow is not a terrible sound at any time, but at this especial moment it acted upon her nerves in such a manner that she would have preferred the roar of a tiger, without calculating consequences.

Again it came, and she sat up in bed, feeling obliged to listen. In the midst of her unreasonable fright a practical fear crossed her mind.

For the first time for many days she had a small store of provisions in the house, and a stray cat might have got in, and might be then in the act of consuming them. She sprang out of bed, caught up a shawl, which she threw over her shivering shoulders, hurried to the door, and out on to the landing, the boards striking cold and chill to her bare feet.

There she stood still, listening with all her ears; the coffee, the ends of the sausages, and the loaves were downstairs in the room she called her kitchen, though little was cooked in it, but the mewing came from inside the door of the room that had been her lodger's!

Afra was dead, and dead cats make no more noise than defunct human beings. With a certain amount of curiosity and fear, she pushed open the door gently, as if there were somebody behind it who was likely to hear.

The moonlight was streaming in at the shutterless windows, making the room as light as day; and there in the middle of the floor straight in front of her, sat the figure of the hunchback, as if he had never stirred from his lodging, and he was fondling his white cat, which was purring on his shoulder!

With a cry she rushed back to her own room, and locked the door. Then she threw herself on her knees by her children, and prayed that Heaven might keep both her and them from ghosts, and all evil things.

(To be continued.)

#### A MOORISH KETTLEDRUM.

At four o'clock tea is served. The salon is carpeted richly. The doors are done in arabesque designs. The tray is of polished inlaid metal. The teapot is of superb proportions and capacity. The tea is of that pungent green colour, and of full flavour before being boiled. It is belled with a compound like molasses, and is served up like a decoction of honey flavoured with tea. This is a pioneer cup.

A second cup (and, by the way, the china cups are all glass saucers, to speak Hibernially) is made of tea and a peculiar herb which gives the taste of a boiled mint julep. Then you smoke a tiny cigar made of tobacco that resembles the perique of Louisiana, only not so pure. Then comes another cup of tea, and composed this time of the green, pure herb itself, with a mixture of Teguquin beans and lemon verbena, or a little prepared snuff. More smoke follows, then another cup of tea; and this time you have nux vomica, ambergris and wormwood in the cup that cheers not, but is likely to inebriate.

In deference to our princely hosts, we had to do all these teasing things. More smoke. Yet it is mere puffs, as the Moor is not given strongly to the solace of man.

A Moorish dinner excels the tea. If you can imagine all the cosmetics, pomades, joojabe pastes, hair oil, tamar indien and coconuts fibre patties being rolled into you, you can fancy the first dinner dish of a Moorish prince.

I am grateful that I survive to record this feature of an imperial Morocco menu. May I never live to witness or taste another.

A six-foot high stranger sitting cross-legged on a bilious-coloured carpet to such a dinner is a terrible sight, and beggars description. Then behold him trying to feed himself, *a la mode*, by grabbing the aforesaid pomatum out of the big dish in the centre of the carpet, and then daintily pitching them down his throat as invalid experts swallow pills without water. I admired the dexterity of the prince, but spoiled my fifteen dollar vest. I hailed the relays of napkins and washbowls. I washed my face and hands seven times during the dinner, and, though the room was reeking with the odours of incense, to this day carry the fumes of that repast with my best clothes.

The pale green and blue complexion I presented before half the banquet was over would have delighted Mr. James Whistler for a sweet little study of a nocturne or symphony done in oleo-margarine. And all this time the ladies of the prince's harem were invisibly looking on at my spasms!

## A TANGLED WEB.

### CHAPTER XIII.

THREE MONTHS AFTER.

THE sad events of the closing year had thrown such a gloom over the feelings of the inmates of Bramington Rectory and "The Olives," that all Christmas and New Year's gatherings, as far as they were concerned, were at an end—even Miss Gruesome and Mr. Boyd postponing their nuptials for a month in compliment to the bereaved family.

The newly-made grave was reopened for the body of Mrs. Davering, where, united in death, husband and wife lay side by side; whilst a railing placed round the same protected the flowers, planted by loving hands, from the depredations of visitors to the churchyard.

"I am becoming quite myself again, old fellow," he wrote to Captain Lipscombe, "and even Christine has hopes that I shall not by my presence throw a gloom over her approaching wedding. No fear of that; I shall be quite glad of the change of once more seeing the old house full of people, and, as Addie's old governess has opened the ball by walking off with Farmer Boyd, I think your turn ought to come next—"

"Who are you writing to?" said Addie, who happened to enter the library just as he had arrived at that point.

"To Lipscombe, love. Have you any message?"

"No," answered his wife, "only I wish you would make haste and finish, or leave off altogether, as Christie and I want you in the drawing-room. The dresses for Maude and Ally have just arrived, and they are so lovely!"

"All right, here goes:—"

"Good-bye, Lipscombe, for Addie is bothering me as usual."

"In haste, your sincere friend,  
"MAURICE."

"What a shame," said Addie, looking over his shoulder. "But fold it up; there, that will do, and come along."

Christine, with Helen and Eleanor, who were on a visit to "The Olives," were first admiring close, then at a distance, some children's dresses with hats to match, which were to be worn by the little ones as bridesmaids on the eventful occasion of her marriage, which was to take place the following week.

"I can fancy how proud Ally will be," said Addie.

"Yes, and how pretty she will look," added her husband. "But here, Robert, run off with this to the post," he said, as in answer to his summons the page entered the room, and he handed him the letter he had written to Hilton Lipscombe.

There was no less excitement at the Rectory than at "The Olives," where dressmakers and milliners were busy plying their needles in and out of the delicate dresses, which seemed too fragile to be worked by human hands. But at last the few remaining stitches were finished, and the toilets of the bride and bridesmaids only waited to be worn.

Captain Lipscombe arrived from London on the preceding evening putting up at the only hotel Lorton provided—which was on a very small scale—until the morning arrived when he was to meet Christine at the altar.

The library table was completely covered with the numerous and costly gifts from friends and relatives, amongst which was to be seen a diamond bracelet, which shone as a mass of glowworms in the firelight, the present of the bridegroom, from whom each of the four bridesmaids received a horse-shoe, set with the same precious stones.

The morning came in bright and clear, the March sun adding a brilliancy to the early spring landscape, over which, a tiny beam



of glass, the hoar frost still rested, until swept away beneath the rays of the former.

"Oh! mademoiselle, but you are lovely!" exclaimed Augusta, as she dexterously placed a white bud here, or a spray of orange blossom there, until she declared Christine was more like an angel than a human being, whilst the crystal necklet which surrounded her snowy throat was scarcely able to eclipse the brilliancy of her dark, soft eyes.

The bells from the village church rang out merrily again and again, and the church itself was filled with not only the friends of the bride, but the inhabitants of the two parishes who could spare time to witness the ceremony, as Christine, much beloved by the poor in the neighbourhood, had blessings showered on her from all quarters.

As she entered the door of the sacred edifice, supported on the arm of Maurice, all eyes were turned, a smothered exclamation of admiration expressed on beholding her beauty and that of the four pretty young girls as they followed in her train, carrying large bouquets of flowers, also the bridegroom's gift, and which in the case of Ally almost hid her entirely from view.

Mr. Borun, in his white robes, was awaiting them at the altar rails, and as the organ ceased his clear voice resounded through the holy building as he commenced the ceremony which was to make them man and wife; and the same being finished, the organist rolled forth the stirring notes of Mendelssohn's Wedding March, as, after repairing to the vestry, Captain Lipscombe led his bride from the church to the carriage awaiting them.

The wedding breakfast was provided by Maurice at "The Olives," whither the whole party adjourned, after which Christine retired to change her dress, and, amongst the congratulations of all assembled, soon entered the carriage which awaited them to take them to the station, followed by Hilton.

A shower of rice was scattered on the carriage roof as they drove off, amid waving handkerchiefs and kisses thrown from little hands, an old slipper being the last missile of good fortune aimed at the retreating vehicle, which had the effect of nearly bringing the inmates of the same to grief.

It had been thrown by Robert, who, in his anxiety to add his share to the luck of the newly-married couple, sent it from an upper window, unfortunately knocking off the driver's hat, which lodging on the ear of the near horse so upset the dignity of that animal that it was with difficulty the coachman could restore him to a sense of his bearings, and prevail on him to forget the insult offered.

"I wonder who did that?" said Sampson, who had only viewed the result.

"I should just like to know," added the culprit, who appeared on the scene unknown to the rest of the servants who had assembled to witness the departure.

"I daresay I shouldn't have to go far to find out who it was," replied Sampson, whose eye happened just then to alight on Robert. "You be off, you young rascal, and get them glasses washed before I have the pleasure of pulling your ears;" an order which the page hastened to obey, after having placed the finger of one hand to the thumb of the other, placing the hind one to his nose in a very significant way at the back of the butler.

He was apparently very busy when he heard the footsteps of the latter approaching the pantry, to which he hastened with the agility of a cat from the kitchen, where he had been relating to the kitchenmaid how he had taken the old man in, the disrespectful designation by which he generally styled the butler.

"You, naughty, good-for-nothing boy," said Mrs. Bunkin, who happened to have overheard the conversation. "I'll just tell Mr. Sampson the way in which you insult him behind his back."

But Mr. Sampson being too much engaged at the time in decanting wine for the evening

ball which was to take place, paid little attention to that lady's complaints.

The large dining-room, from which all the furniture was removed with the exception of the chairs, which, with others hired for the occasion, were placed round the walls, was converted into a ballroom; the carpet had been taken up, and the floor slightly polished, a large lump of chalk, for the services of the dancers, being placed at each corner.

At one end the band was stationed, whilst flags were tastefully grouped between the large family portraits in their massive frames, surmounted by festoons of evergreens, which extended all round the apartment.

Invitations to all the neighbouring villages, from which all the élite of the same were gathered, whilst from the country town, which was a garrison one, the officers of the regiment were also invited, brought together such an assemblage, brilliant in scarlet and gold, which, mingling with the varied and elegant dresses of the ladies, combined to cause such an effect as was never before seen within the walls of "The Olives."

Sampson, who had never witnessed such before in his time, was so overcome with the music and excitement, that he became, as James the cockney footman styled, slightly intoxicated; whilst the latter gentleman, who could not, when the band struck up, resist the temptation of whirling mademoiselle round the servants' hall, declaring, "as for himself, he was in ecstasies," which Mrs. Bunkin mistaking for hysterics treated accordingly.

The girls from the Rectory were not allowed to return to Bramington that night, or, rather, the next morning, the festivities not breaking up until long after the streak of dawn had appeared in the eastern sky.

"You are very tired, Addie!" said Maurice to his wife, as the last guest departed, and they returned to the room, now looking desolate and miserable, as the early rays of the coming day looked in through the windows on the bare floor and tawdry decorations of the preceding evening.

The boards were covered with shreds of different coloured dresses as they were torn from the backs of the fair owners as they whirled round in the mazy dance; but notwithstanding her fatigue, Addie stayed long in the forsaken room, conversing with her husband, after the remainder of the household had retired to rest.

Since Mr. Davering's death the custom of going all round the rooms the last thing was dispensed with, Maurice having sufficient faith in those around him not to fear for the safety of the relics which his father had guarded with jealous care.

"Why, you are falling asleep, darling!" said Maurice, after a while, as notwithstanding her assertion to the contrary, Addie had almost succumbed to the fatigue she would not own.

"Yes, I am getting tired now," she replied. "One look at baby, and then, dear, to rest."

Linking her arm within that of her husband, she ascended to her room, not forgetting first to peep in on, to the young mother, the prettiest picture to be seen; their baby boy quietly sleeping in his little cot, one rounded arm raised above his head, as the other was carelessly thrown over the coverlet, which it rivalled in its snowy whiteness, when, impressing a soft kiss on the dimpled cheek where the dark, long lashes rested, she sought the rest she so much needed.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### A YULE-TIDE GATHERING.

THE months have passed rapidly away since the events of the last chapter. Captain and Mrs. Lipscombe have settled down in their London home as a very matter-of-fact husband and wife; the roses have again bloomed and withered beneath a summer sky and the rich golden harvest been gathered into the granaries.

O'er the grave, where the iron rails divide it from the burial ground, the last flower has shed its fragrance, to pass away for ever, and many a fresh mound has been raised in the little churchyard since that Christmas, one year since, when Mr. and Mrs. Davering were laid to their last rest.

The stone placed by loving hands has even become moss-grown, losing the virgin whiteness which it possessed when first erected, as again the snow falls over church and plain, and the Christmas bells ring out in the frosty air.

Mr. Borun is hale and healthy as ever, as, with one hand enclosed in that of little Ally, now grown into Maude's cast-off clothes, he wends his way across the fields, deriving benefit from the sharp morning breeze.

"A glorious day this, Mr. Boyd?" said the former, as the latter, with his wife (Miss Gruesome of old), meets him in the snow-covered land; "and a merry Christmas to you."

"The same to you, sir!" returned the farmer, whilst his wife endorsed his good wishes, telling Ally to give her love to her mamma and sisters.

"All well up at 'The Olives,' I hope, sir?" continued Mr. Boyd.

"Yes, thank you," replied the Rector. "Mrs. Davering has got a little daughter; I suppose you know."

"No, sir, I didn't," was the reply, which Mrs. Boyd resented by telling her husband he ought to be ashamed of himself, as she had told him the news a month ago when the baby was born.

"Well, my dear, you do speak so much and so fast," replied the farmer, apologetically, "that you must excuse me if I do sometimes forget what you say. Besides which, you know, parson," he continued, addressing Mr. Borun, "babies isn't much in my line, with all respect to Mrs. Davering."

Mrs. Boyd slightly frowned at this assertion, but their ways laying in different directions, and as standing to talk with a cold easterly wind blowing in one's face is more conducive to obtaining a cough than to the pleasure of conversation, that lady proposed that it was time to return homewards.

"Well, good-day," said Mr. Borun; "we shall see you at church to-morrow, I suppose," and, with an assurance that he would, Mr. Boyd followed in the footsteps of his wife, who had already moved homewards.

"The Lipscombes will be here to-morrow," said Addie to her husband the same day, as they were talking over the arrangements they had made for the Christmas festivities.

The winter day was fast waning, and Maurice, after having told his wife that he thought she had made a mistake, again read the letter the latter had received that morning from Christine.

"Ah, I thought you were wrong!" he said. "It is to-day they are coming," and no sooner were the words out of his mouth than a thundering rat-tat resounded on the hall-door, and Christie's voice was heard in the entrance.

"Oh! you dear, darling!" cried Addie, as she rushed to meet her friend—not the sad-faced Christie who had stood in that sombre hall a year previous, with the tears streaming down her pretty face; but the happy, joyous young wife, who nearly upset Mrs. Davering, who was not very strong, as she enfolded her in a rather rough embrace.

"She'll be the death of your wife, Maurice," said the Captain, alluding to Christie's enthusiastic greeting. "Hold hard there!" he called out, not to his wife, but to the servant, who was about to move off with the trap from which they had just alighted; "we'll have those things out before you go."

And accordingly Robert's services were called on by Sampson, who always enforced the page to perform any service which was not agreeable to his feelings, and, as he preferred remaining in the warm hall to proceed—

ing to the trap to bring in what it contained, that duty devolved on the younger party.

From the luggage and hampers the same contained, Addie might have presumed the Captain and his wife had intended to take up their permanent abode at "The Olives," and Maurice was unable to restrain a hearty laugh at the sight of the turkeys, hares, &c., which they had brought as a present for their host.

"Duced kind of you, Lipscombe, old fellow," he said; "but you know, my boy, we have more already than we know how to get rid of of that kind of thing down here."

"Then burn them," said the Captain, who looked rather crest-fallen, whilst Christine almost felt inclined to quarrel with Maurice, for what she considered was most ungracious on his part.

"No, we won't," said Addie; "we will send them off to papa, where poultry and game are not quite so plentiful as they are here."

And so it was arranged, to the satisfaction of all, and Mrs. Borun was delighted, as on the same evening they were delivered at Bramington with Mrs. Lipscombe's love.

"You are not cross with me, Christie, are you?" as later on he advanced to her side, where she sat nursing the new baby, as Ally called it.

"Cross? No," she replied; "but it would serve you right if Hilton was to run away with Addie really, as you made him once do in fancy."

"Hush, Christie," said Maurice, as a tinge of pain passed over his countenance, "don't name that, dear, it bears too strongly on a painful past."

"Forgive me, Maurice, I did not mean it should, but what about this young lady? What is she to be called?" said Christine, referring to the baby on her knees.

"Well, I wished to call her Addie, but her mother insists on her being named Bertha."

"Bertha!" repeated Christine, sadly; but the nurse, entering at the time, and relieving her of the little stranger, she said no more respecting the choice made for the infant's name.

Lipscombe had quite recovered his disappointment with regard to his rejected gift, and as little Master Edward Davering fully appreciated the one he had brought him—a large rocking-horse—he was quite satisfied.

"Send him to bed, Addie," said Maurice at last, as the young gentleman became exceedingly troublesome in monopolising the Captain's services in the guidance of his wooden steed; and on the reappearance of nurse he was carried away, kicking and screaming to such an extent as almost to drown the sound of the bells as they rang in another Christmas, and the crunching of wheels on the frosty ground was heard at the same time.

"I said they'd come," said Addie, as, jumping up, she was about to rush into the hall, when Maurice prevented her.

"You stay here, dear," he said; "I'll go. You will only catch cold," and a few minutes later the Rector and his wife with the four girls were ushered into the presence of the assembled company.

"I thought you would have been disappointed, or I do not think we should have come, dear," said Mrs. Borun, as she clasped Addie in her arms, wishing her a merry Christmas.

"And don't you wish the same to me, Mrs. Borun?" laughed the Captain, as she turned to shake hands with him and Christine.

"Well, I left the Rector to do that in my name," she answered, as she kissed the former. "But isn't this an awful hour to come out?" she asked.

"Not at all," answered Christine; "our only fear was that you would not be here."

"Mamma has always such a lot to do on Christmas Eve, and we could not, or rather would not come without her," said the girls.

But Sampson now entering with a large bowl of punch, Robert following with a tray of glasses, which narrowly escaped being

broken before he placed them on the table, the conversation for the time almost ceased—at least with regard to any topic but that which was now uppermost in the thoughts of all—as filling each glass to the brim Maurice raised his own, wishing each and all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, as he drained it to the dregs.

And not alone in the dining-room was the toast proposed, for Sampson, by the order of his master, had prepared the same for the servants' hall, where, even to the kitchen-maid, each and everyone's health was drunk, and the compliments of the season passed from one to the other.

"It doesn't seem like a year since the poor master was taken out, does it?" said Mrs. Bunkin, as she took her glass from the hand of Mr. Sampson.

"No, that it don't," replied that individual, regardless of grammar; "and I little thought when we were a preparin' for the festive season—as such it always was at 'The Olives'—that that same one would have been Mr. Davering's last Christmas."

[THE END.]

### THE "SPINSTER."

In days ago, spinning played such an important part in a woman's existence that, as Grimm observes, it came to be regarded as her sole occupation, and she was recognized by the appellation "spinster." Yet for the last sixty or seventy years all spinning-wheels have been silent.

I well remember a lumber-room in my grandfather's house into which when a child I used to peep and see more than a dozen old ones; some were prettily inlaid with mother-of-pearl, but all of them were overlaid with other wheels made by spiders, and thickly covered with layers of white dust.

My poor grandmother used to look very sad when I asked about these spinning-wheels; they were hers, and her mother's, and her grandmother's, and no doubt she sometimes fancied she heard the whirr which feet that trod the earth no longer had once set in motion. She herself had, as she avowed with gentle triumph, "spun a rare good thread in her day;" but when I asked her why she did not go on spinning good thread, her answer was, "No one spins now," and if I pushed my inquiries further, I was told that it was easy enough to spin, but that there was no way of getting the thread you made used, for there were no handlooms now. That, no doubt, summed up the whole difficulty.

Every little group of villages once had its weaver, and much earnest thought was given in those days to patterns for table-linen. In a novel of George Eliot's one of the truest touches of nature is the contempt which the sister who "held with a sprig" felt for the sister who had always "held with a spot."

A spot was utterly commonplace, and to be satisfied with a spot when she might have had—what I have seen on a tablecloth—the whole history of Jonah, the exact portrait of the whale which swallowed him, the facade of a gorgeous palace in Nineveh, together with her own initials in the corner, betrayed a grovelling mind.

In the days of homespun linen every woman made it a matter of pride and conscience to leave behind her in the family chests and presses at least as much as she found when she "came," namely, married into the family. Such pleasures and prides have long been things of the past.

A collection of fans was sold last month at Madrid, when one of ivory, painted by Watteau, which formerly belonged to the Princess Adelaide of Savoy, fetched £150. A fan painted by Boucher sold for £190, and another painted by Lebrun for the Duchess of Medina Celi went for £90.

### THE LOVELY LADY LEIGH.

(Continued from page 372.)

"The rival beauties, the lovely Lady Leigh and Miss Avonmore, have gone to the seat of war, with the intention, it is believed, of nursing the sick and wounded," was the rather startling paragraph that greeted the eyes of their friends in the *Morning Post* some few days later. To no one had they breathed a word of their intention, merely begging Lord and Lady Grafton to excuse them, as they wanted to transact some very important business that required their actual presence.

On the day that the *Morning Star* steamed out of the docks, bearing the two sad-eyed women to the land of war, Lord and Lady Grafton received a letter begging their forgiveness for keeping their intention so secret; and the old lady's eyes were moist as she raised her head from the perusal of this epistle, saying to her husband—

"I cannot help fancying that Lady Leigh has lost her proud heart to Sir Frederic, and he, too, seemed to be taken with her. I am sorry that he has gone out there."

"Well, my dear Maria, if he cares for her and she for him, they will meet and make a match of it," replied the Earl quietly.

"Yes, but you do not seem to understand what I mean. Mrs. Ventley says she thinks they have met and parted before ever they were introduced in London," said Lady Grafton.

"Mrs. Ventley is, pardon the expression, a gossiping old woman, and I have no patience with her," returned the Earl irately; and Lady Grafton changed the subject, and just then Mrs. Ventley herself appeared at the open window.

"Have you heard the news?" she said. "My dear Lady Grafton, just imagine, those two girls to go off by themselves like that! Why, I would have been only too glad to have gone to any sacrifice for their sakes."

Lord Grafton smiled grimly behind his newspaper as he said gravely—

"And it would have been a good chance of seeing the place, eh, Mrs. Ventley?"

"Oh, indeed! I was not thinking of that. I am sure I don't suppose there would be time for sightseeing. They have gone to nurse the sick and wounded, you must remember, my lord," replied that lady, with mild reproof in voice and face.

"No one would dream of accusing Mrs. Ventley of interested motives," he returned, gallantly; "and I am sure they would have found you invaluable as a nurse."

"That they would!" said Mrs. Ventley, complacently taking his words all in good faith, and glancing at her helpless, fat, jewelled hands as she said, "These hands have never known work, but there are other things—reading to the poor creatures, and talking."

"Of course," assented the Earl, taking delight in drawing out the selfishness of the woman's character for his wife's edification. "It is seldom they get the chance of conversing with women of refined education."

"You understand exactly what I mean," she exclaimed, delightedly. "I must run up to my room now and write to dear Gertie."

She always said "run"—it sounded juvenile; and with a sweet smile, meant to be bewildering, she disappeared amid a flutter of lace and ribbons, leaving an overpowering odour of "Jockey Club" behind her.

"Now, my dear Maria, did you ever hear so much balderdash in all your life as that woman has treated us to in a few minutes?" asked the Earl, turning to his wife.

"I did not think anyone could be so sublimely selfish," she returned. "Those girls have gone out with the intention of being nurses."

"Yes; fancy, reading and talking to them! Bah! it is sickening!" interrupted her husband.



hard, as he rose. "I am going to my study," he added, as he walked to the door.

Left alone, Lady Grafton sat pondering many things till a puzzled expression stole over her comely features, and then she rose from her chair, shaking her white curls as though she could find no answer to her perplexed questions.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE *Morning Star*, ploughing the waves in valiant style, was nearing her destination. Along the shores could be seen the curious trees that are peculiar to tropical climes, and the glistening-white houses were perfectly visible, and towards evening the engines slackened speed; the anchor was heard to drop, and Lady Leigh and her companion knew that they would soon be near those they loved.

Low rumbling, as if gunssounded in the air, and the sharp crack of artillery mingled with the crash of shells; but in their wild, though outwardly calm, despair they heeded nothing save the fact that come what would they were here now to save the lives of the men who knew not that they were beloved, or to watch over them in their last hours.

Not a word had reached them during the voyage, which to them—though, in reality, a short one—had seemed never-ending in its monotony, of the war, and it was with a sense of utter helplessness, though with brave hearts, that they set out on the following day for the camp hospital.

It was early morning, the sun just having risen to its height, and a cool breeze fluttered the sides of the tents as they stood, white and glistening, in the sunshine.

The encampment was just outside the town on a large plain. All looked so quiet and peaceful it seemed almost impossible that soon it might be a scene of horror.

Men were standing about at the entrances to the tents in their white helmets and loose fatigues, talking and laughing in a careless, don't-care manner.

A large tent had been erected for the sick and wounded, and towards this Lady Leigh and Gertrude Avonmore made their way.

Gertrude raised her eyes wistfully, and with a half-fearful expression in them, to her companion's calm face, as she saw the white tent, and felt that perhaps he was not there now—that her journey might have been made to view his grave.

Lady Endora, seeing that glance, and guessing her thoughts, paused a moment to lay her hand on the other's shoulder, as she said, with a grave, sweet, and smile,—

"Be brave, Gertrude; remember, you are a soldier's sweetheart."

Many were the glances cast back upon the tall, stately form robed in dark gray, and upon the pale, calm face with the possibilities of such deep passion in the large mournful dark eyes, that gazed so earnestly round at the spot where she felt that he would gather his men for the final march, for she had learnt that there was to be a grand fight at Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir, which would, in all probability, end the war; and while her proud heart throbbed at the thought of the honour to Sir Frederic, the woman's fear for the loved one sent a thrill of sickening dread through her whole frame.

"Two new nurses!" was the whisper that went round the camp; and so they were looked upon with reverence by those rough, brave men, for they felt that here were women who would do their work well.

"Is Lieutenant Crawford still in the hospital?" asked Lady Leigh of a man standing just within the tent.

"Yes," he replied, stiffly, but with politeness. "Do you want to see him?"

"We have come out to nurse the sick and wounded, and have received permission to go with the soldiers wherever they go," replied Lady Leigh quickly; and the man, who was one of the Army Hospital Corps, stepped back,

a pleased smile lighting up his rugged, scarred face.

"Come in. We have so few nurses. None here at all!" he said, in glad, subdued tones.

Gertrude's face paled. No nurses! Then how had her darling fared?

"Take me to his bedside, please?" she said, in a pleading tone, that told part of her story to the man's heart; and he pitied the lovely girl as he thought of the shock she would receive on beholding Lieutenant Crawford.

"My name is Leigh, and this young lady's Moore," said Lady Endora, as they moved softly along by the long, straight bedsteads that had been put up for the wounded men.

It was a pitiful sight, those strong men, in their full youth and health, laid low by the cruel ravages of war.

Some were delicious and stared with unseeing eyes at the two pale-faced women, calling out in hoarse voices that sounded horrible there in that quiet place,—

"Now, boys, we'll have a go at them. Charge!"

Others were lying passively enough, but with a restlessness that told of their longing to be out in the open air again in their large, hollow eyes.

A gleam of pleasure stole across their features at sight of Lady Leigh's calm, patrician face. Had she come to talk to them, or merely as a visitor? At this a feeling of disappointment sank into their hearts.

The men of the Army Hospital Corps were kind and unremitting in their attention, sitting up night after night with the raving men till they became hollow-eyed and pale as the sufferers themselves; but the weary men longed infinitely for the gentle soothing of a woman's presence—longed for it more than ever now that they had gained a sight of those gentle, sympathising faces.

Stopping by the side of a long, white bed near the end of the tent the man turned to the two and said,—

"I will leave you now. This is Captain Crawford's bed."

They did not heed the new title, but as he turned away Gertrude went forward, stifling a cry as she saw the white, emaciated face, looking doubly thin from the bandages round the head.

"Bertie," she whispered, gently, taking one of his hands, lying so helplessly on the rough coverlet, but the sick man turned away, closing his eyes wearily.

"Another dream," he muttered, restlessly; then as her voice again fell distinct and low upon his ear, and he felt the soft pressure of her hand, he opened his eyes again, and gazed at her flushing face in stupefied, glad surprise.

"Bertie," she whispered again, "do you not know me? I am Gertrude Avonmore."

"How came you here?" he breathed, in hushed accents, his hand closing feebly over hers.

"I came because I heard you were wounded nearly unto death," she replied, the solemn quiet of that place taking away her natural shyness.

In the awful presence of Death, which she felt was very near some there, she could tell him what she would never have told him in his health and strength.

"May I strive to get well for your sake, Gertrude?" he murmured, through his parched lips, and she stooped forward, pressing a shy caress on his thin hand, whispering,—

"Yes, Bertie; only get strong quickly."

He did not show any inclination to speak again, but lay there like a little child, breathing softly, and holding her hand with a feeble clasp that brought the tears to her eyes.

Could it be really not two months back that he had stood before her so brave and confident, full of vigorous health and strength? It seems as if it must be a dream. She looked round once and saw Lady Leigh seated by the side of a gaunt, grey-haired soldier, who evidently had not long to live.

There was a grave, earnest look on his damp, white face as he gazed up into the pale statuesque countenance bending so tenderly over him.

The doctor came in just then to change the bandages on his chest and arm. A quiet look of resolution passed over Lady Leigh's patrician features.

"Let me help," she said, in a firm, low voice.

With a quick searching look into her face, which took in every detail, the doctor nodded, and then raised the weak form with one hand, directing her movements with the other, as the pitted woman of society gently removed the stiff bandages, and applied fresh to the wounded limbs of the rough old soldier, whose dim eyes followed her with a glance of untold gratitude.

"You are a splendid nurse, Miss Leigh!" observed the doctor, admiringly, as he laid the man back on his pillow. "Quick, without hurry and clumsiness. Have you had much experience?"

"None," she replied. "I asked a few questions of a trained nurse who came out with us, but of real experience I have had none."

"Many a trained nurse has not your gentleness of touch. I can safely leave my patients in your charge," he said.

And so they passed along the tents, applying fresh, clean bandages to the gaping wounds, and cooling cloths to the hot, feverish heads.

"You will trust us, then?" said Lady Leigh, as the doctor stood at the narrow tent-opening. He had attended to Bertie Crawford's wounds, Gertrude lending her assistance in a timid, gentle way that charmed the bluff old soldier.

"I should think so. Why, I have not seen so many contented faces since they began to mend as I see now."

And, with these words, he hurried off, for there were many waiting for his attention in the town hospital.

Presently beef-tea was brought, and it was a curious, pleasing, yet half-painful sight to witness those two fair patrician women feeding the once strong men, now lying helpless as infants, and to hear them striving to speak their thanks in low, hoarse voices. To some the effort was too great, and they lay back, gazing dumbly at their nurses, as they moved noiselessly about.

As the afternoon waned, the old soldier, whom the doctor had attended first, became delirious, and heavey guttural cries issued from between his parched lips. Then Lady Leigh, leaving him in charge of one of the corps, slipped out alone, fearing nothing in her anxiety to help his men. It was a good distance from the camp to the town, and she felt bewildered by the chattering of the Arabs in their own strange tongue, as they sought to sell their goods.

When she appeared at the door of the tent some time later, her hands were laden with rich, ripe fruit, that filled the air with fragrance. She gave some to Gertrude, and together they quenched the thirst of the poor creatures lying so helpless. She stopped last by the dying soldier, pouring the welcome juice of an orange into his half-opened mouth.

He lay very quiet after that; then, just when the sun was sinking like a ball of fire in the western horizon, sending pale crimson shafts across the white walls of the tents, and touching the men's faces into renewed life, he half-rose in the bed, slinking back with a half-choked cry.

Lady Leigh rose quickly, and put her arms under him, raising him to a sitting posture; but his exertions had opened the wound in his chest, and the blood was staining the bed-clothes, and pouring in a thin red stream over her arm. With quiet self-possession, though her face was drawn with horror, she staunched the blood and bound the wound afresh, soothing the dying man by her gentle ministrings.

She did not know that a man with erect, soldierly bearing had been standing, there a witness to all that had passed. She did not see the quick look of startled surprise, nor the swift wave of passionate tenderness that swept over the grave, handsome face as he watched her gentle manner of tending that wounded man.

"My darling!" he murmured, turning from the tent and passing out into the open, "I have wronged you! The faults are not all on one side."

The stars were already coming out in the blue sky. A strange light rested over the earth; for the moon was rising even while the west was crimson from the rays of the departing sun, and an exceeding quiet reigned all around. Presently, as he stood there in the hush of the short dusk, there came to him a strange, gurgling, strangled cry, and Sir Frederic Gordon knew that the lovely Lady Leigh was face to face with death in its most harrowing form. He knew by the cross on her breast that she had come out as a nurse, and instincts told him for whose sake she had left the busy, pleasant haunts of society for these wild, dangerous parts.

He did not see Gertie sitting so quietly by the side of her exhausted lover, her eyes resting lovingly on his face, but ever on the watch for a call from the other's. He saw only that one face, sublimely beautiful in its new tenderness, and he longed to clasp her in his arms, forgiving and forgetting all that had occurred in the past; but duty must be above all, and with a jerk he drew himself up, and walked away to one of the tents round the hospital.

"Bertie is getting so rapidly well that he will be able to be removed soon," said Gertrude to Lady Leigh, a few days later.

"I am going with the soldiers to Kassassin," said Lady Leigh. "Are you intending staying here? I suppose so, for it is now he requires your aid."

Gertrude blushed as she gave her friend a quick, grateful glance. She had not cared to appear to desert the Lady Leigh, and yet her heart was longing to be near Bertie.

"Do you think it will seem strange?" she asked, a little timidly.

"Strange? certainly not!" was the reply. "You can visit the hospital in town, and do good there. I am certain you will not forget the poor creatures there in your happiness."

"No, indeed!" said the girl, fervently, and then the two friends entered the tent where so many beds were empty that had been filled when they first came, but all were not dead. Some were in the convalescent ward of the hospital, which was the only part that had room for more; and many were the anxious, tender glances turned upon the calm, gentle face of the lovely Lady Leigh, when she could leave her suffering patients to visit them; and Gertie, too, was greeted with pleasure, but hers was a face that only spoke of childlike goodness and purity; while Lady Leigh's statuesque pale face, with its firm, scarlet lips, and dark, glowing eyes, inspired with trust and reverence, the proud, beautiful face that told of a woman who would go through with her work to the end, no matter what that end might be.

A few days after the foregoing conversation Bertie Crawford was removed to the town, and Gertrude had taken up her abode in the hospital, for the march to Kassassin had been arranged to take place on the following day.

It was evening, and the sun had departed, and that sudden darkness known only in tropical climes had fallen upon the earth. The stars came out one by one, bright, beautiful, shedding a pale light down upon the scattered white tents of the camp; on the gleaming bayonets of the sentinels pacing to and fro with measured tread; on the train standing there ready to carry its burden in the morning; and on the pale, grave, but calmly serene, face of Lady Leigh, as she stood near the hospital tent, now empty, bidding Gertrude "good-bye."

There was a great and solemn sadness in this farewell, said in the half dark, with only the stars above them, and the occasional cry of some night bird, or the bark of a dog the only sounds to be heard.

When and where would they meet again? This was the question that scarcely dared frame itself in Gertrude Avonmore's mind, but it found expression in her speaking eyes, and Lady Leigh bent and kissed the fair, downy cheeks.

"Courage, you must remember only the glory," was all she said.

But the heiress knew what she meant, and smiled bravely, saying, as she put her hand on Lady Leigh's arm,—

"The danger is yours, and you speak to me of courage. I am selfish in my grief."

"Never selfish, Gertie, only over-anxious, that is all. We shall all be laughing and flirting together next season, as though no such thing as this war had been."

Gertrude glanced furtively at the pale, dark-eyed face, and the expression upon it told her that those were merely idle words. Never again would Lady Leigh be the same.

A gentle, proud calm had taken the place of that cold hauteur—a something had entered into her life that had altered all. Those with whom she came in contact now worshipped her, for there was that in the sweet graciousness of voice and manner, in the quiet, grave face that spoke the purity of the soul that had passed through the chastening fire and come out pure and humble.

"You must go now, Gertie," said Lady Leigh, as the notes of a bugle rang out clearly on the stillness. "It is getting late, and I do not like the idea of your being out in this place after dark. Good-bye, Heaven bless you!"

She drew the girl to her and held her tight for a moment, and the girl felt the farewell that Lady Leigh's lips would not speak in that close, passionate clasp.

"Good-bye," she whispered, and then Lady Leigh was alone in the starlight with her sad thoughts—thoughts rendered more sad by the bitter remembrance of what might have been.

She stood there watching the alight, black-robed figure until it was lost to sight in the darkness, and then she turned and entered her tent.

Next morning the reveille rang out sharp and clear at four o'clock; and in the dim, grey light of early dawn Lady Leigh stood among a group of soldiers taking her orders calmly amid the loud blaring of the bugles and the quick, sharp voices of the officers giving their commands.

The tents were gone, the baggage-waggons loaded. All, though in apparent confusion, was in perfect order; and, just as the first golden shafts shot across the sky from the rising sun, the men fell in and marched away, amid loud cheers and shouts from the English, who had gathered there to witness their departure, and the inspiring sound of the band.

## CHAPTER VII.

A DEATHLY silence reigned over the wide, golden plain where the troops were encamped. A few straggling beams of early dawn appeared in the East, and cast a strange, weird light over the slumbering camp. The outposts stood afar off, erect and motionless; and the tired, but vigilant, sentinels paced to and fro.

In the distance were the tents of the enemy. All was peaceful and calm to the outward eye. Presently there was a stir in the English camp; men moved cautiously, but swiftly, about in the wan light, horses were saddled, and their owners leaped upon their backs with grim, stern faces, and firm set lips. Companies formed, and stood quietly awaiting orders.

And in the enemy's camp the dusky sentinels kept up their monotonous tramp

tramp to and fro, and the silent outposts remained still and erect, never dreaming of the preparations for a sudden rush that were being made under the direction of the astute English general.

The cavalry stood ready for a rush, a look of keen delight on their rugged, sunburnt faces, while a party of foot soldiers went forward, creeping on their hands and knees up the high wall of sand, that kept their movements from the observation of the enemy, like red-bodied snakes.

Suddenly, upon the oppressive stillness rang out the welcome cry, "Charge!" and with a whirl as of thunder the horses leaped forward, raising a cloud of golden dust, and in another moment the enemy were seen running about the camp in wild, terrified confusion, as the Highlanders thundered madly over the plain straight into their camp.

They were taken utterly by surprise. There was no time for a regular system in forming their men. Some fled, throwing away their arms and ammunition as they ran; some stayed, in the vain hope that the Arabs would yet win. They rallied for a while, and the air was filled with the sharp crack of the artillery, the loud booming of guns and horrid sound of shells, as they burst above the soldiers' heads.

Wild shrieks of agony mingled with the sounds of warfare as the men fell, dead or wounded, and Lady Endora Leigh stood in the ambulance waggon watching the strife with wide gleaming eyes, and face so pale that she looked unearthly in the uncertain light.

She knew that Sir Frederic Gordon was foremost in that wild, first rush, knew that wherever he led his men he would be at the head; and though she could not wish it to be otherwise, a sickening feeling of dread took possession of her soul, and each dying shriek pierced her as a knife.

In the dim light she could see that the Arabs had rallied and were gathering in a square for a final repulse, but as they advanced a company of the—th wheeled round on their left flank, and before they could recover from their surprise they were attacked on their right. They made one desperate attempt to again rally their men, but it was too late; and with wild affrighted cries the Arabs fled, scattering their camp fires, and overturning the provisions in their mad flight. Then out upon the cold, grey air rang a voice that Lady Endora knew, a voice that thrilled her through:—

"Charge again, my men! Charge!"

She saw them dig their spurs in their horses' flanks as they rode over the flying enemy; saw them stoop in their saddles, and grapple with the dusky Arabs as they strove to spoor the horses even as they fled; saw their wild, staring, dying eyes as the strong hands of the English soldiery pressed the life out of their bodies. But all this, though afterwards the remembrance filled her with horror, had no effect upon her. Her eyes were strained from their fixed gaze upon one figure, erect and still, save when he turned to wave his hand urging on the men, who, however, seemed to need no urging with him as their leader.

Lady Leigh standing there, so quiet, so passionately, quietly excited, saw one of the Arabs turn and take steady aim. A great fear came to her, though she could not see at whom he aimed, but she guessed, and guessed aright; for Sir Frederic Gordon was seen to throw up his arms as he fell from his saddle, and the tale was told in many households, after the war was over, how he looked up at his men as he fell saying, in a clear, loud voice:—

"Never mind me; don't let the beggars lick us now. The day is ours if we like!"

In the golden sunshine glinting down with blinding radiance over the sandy desert strewn with dead, dying, and wounded, knelt Lady Leigh, supporting the pallid, powdered, stained face of Sir Frederic Gordon with one



hand, while with the other she tried to pour some brandy from the flask at her side down his throat. But his teeth were set hard, and the lips stiff and locked.

"He is wounded in the breast," she said, in a cold, passionless voice to the men who had come to seek for the wounded.

"Dead!" they said, turning away.

"No, no!" she cried out in such piercing tones that they looked up in surprise. "See!" she added, excitedly, waking to the necessity for immediate action, "his heart still beats!"

As she put her hand inside his coat she felt a thick packet in an inner pocket, and drawing it out she slipped it in her breast. She paled as she caught a glimpse of the address, for it was to herself in his handwriting.

When she got back to the ambulance wagon her services were required by those who had fallen in the fight; and though her heart beat with longing to be only at his side, she went about among the wounded men with her accustomed gentle, firm quiet, that soothed even while she dressed the sorest wounds.

Then she turned to Sir Frederic; she had done her duty, the labour of love was hers now. He was lying where they had placed him, on the rude bed that was a luxury in these times, his pale dust-stained face calm and set, his eyes fast closed. Bending over him she softly and tenderly dressed the gaping wound in his breast, after seeing that the ball was not there, and then she tried to bring him back to life and sensibility.

It was a tedious task, but the lovely, loving woman never tired, sitting with eyes of passionate, yearning love fixed upon that unconscious face, while she poured brandy, drop by drop, through the gradually unclosing teeth.

With a deep-drawn gasping sigh the firm lips sprang apart at last, and the quivering lids unsealed, and the large hazel eyes glanced round wonderingly. He started as he saw that still, grey-robed figure at his side; then as if remembrance had come back in a swift flood, he muttered in a low strained voice,—

"Have we routed them entirely?"

"Yes," she replied calmly, feeling that any show of emotion on her part meant death to him. "We have won the battle; they have fled across the desert."

"Thank Heaven," was all he said fervently; he tried to turn away to the darkness, as if wishing for rest, but he was too weak from loss of blood to move. Lady Leigh rose quietly, and without the least apparent exertion, lifted him to an easy position. He did not speak, but, the quick glance from his keen, pained-dimmed eyes repaid her, for she read there the dawn of the old love, and her heart throbbed in quick, glad throbs as she turned away to attend to the others, some of whom were crying out in piteous tones for water.

When she had alleviated their pain and suffering by applying cool bandages to their hot, fevered heads, and quenched their thirst with cooling drinks, she went to the entrance by the ambulance wagon, and standing there in the golden glory of the early morning, with the wide sandy desert stretching away far as the eye could reach, and near the heaps of blood-stained dead—for the Arabs had not stayed to bury their dead, leaving them there with their dusky faces and cold, turned to the clear blue sky—standing amidst this scene of horror, Lady Leigh read the words that told her how cruelly faithless she had been to Sir Frederic Gordon in the unrecalled past.

"Eudora," the letter commenced, "I am going away to-morrow, and feel that I should like you to know how cruelly you have misjudged me. My pride has kept us apart—my pride that you have learned by this time is strong as your own. The woman for whom you accused me of being false to you was my own mother. I blush even now when I write that word which should be sacred, but she proved

herself unworthy even of the name of woman. Leaving her home and child, myself, for a man whom all knew to be a notorious libertine, and who, of course, when his passion cooled, left her to fight with the world she had outraged, alone. She came to me in her helplessness, and being my mother I shielded her from the scorn of the world. That day you saw me I was going to see her off to Mentone, where she has since died. Ah! Eudora, my sorrows were not enough, but you must fail me. Oh, Heaven, shall I ever forget that night!"

One of the wounded men called feebly for help just as she came to this part of the letter, which she had read with dilated, sorrowful eyes, and face growing paler and paler at each succeeding word. She put the papers back in her bosom, and went back to her duties.

Back again at the old camp, or rather back again in the haunts of men, for it was to Cairo that the troops marched after that glorious battle. The journey there was one of perfect beauty; the desert stretching away for the first part on one side, fresh green fields of tall grass, that bent and quivered in the breeze that sent a cool breath over the hot-sunkissed land on the other; then trees appeared—tall, beautiful waving tropical trees—and then they finally arrived at the fair city of Cairo itself.

Lady Leigh had found no time to finish that letter, but she had read enough to show her that it was she who should sue for pardon. Sir Frederic was too weak and ill to seem aware of her presence, though sometimes she fancied he glanced at her as if in gratitude when she rendered him some little service, such as moistening his parched lips, and applying fresh cold cloths to his head.

She did not know that his eyes followed her as she moved about among his men so gently, followed her with a yearning tenderness that told their own tale to some of those who were well enough to take notice of what was going on around them.

One evening, some time after their arrival at Cairo, she was sitting at the window, watching the people passing along the street in their picturesque costumes, when the door of the room opened, and Sir Frederic, who was now convalescent, though very weak, entered.

She rose with a start, for her thoughts had been far away; but when she saw who the intruder was, a deathly pallor overspread her pale, tired face, and she pressed one hand over her heart, as though to still its beating.

And so they stood for one minute gazing at each other with tender, half-pained intensity; then Lady Leigh went forward with clasped hands, and upraised, pleading eyes, kneeling at his feet she cried out in bitter, agonized pleading tones,—

"Fred, Fred! forgive me! I have suffered for my fault. Take me back to your heart."

"My wife!" he whispered, in tones so full of love it sounded like a chord of richest melody. "You have never been absent from my heart."

His wife? Yes, Lady Leigh and Sir Frederic Gordon were husband and wife.

"Why did you not give me a chance of exculpating myself, Eudora? You did not wait to hear my explanation, leaving me the moment there was even a cloud of doubt!" he said, gently, as he clasped the lovely form in his arms; but he received no answer, and he felt her slipping from him, and he had no strength to save her from falling. "Eudora!" he cried out. "For Heaven's sake, do not faint!"

His voice recalled her fainting senses, and with a great effort she raised herself, saying, with a gentle, tender smile,—

"I am a little tired, Fred, with so much nursing."

"Did you read that letter I wrote you?" he asked, drawing her on to a lounge, and laying the proud, glossy head on his shoulder.

"Only the first part, but enough to show

me the wrong I did you," she replied, in a low voice, pressing her lips to his hand.

"Are you not sorry our child died?" he said, looking strangely joyous as he asked the question.

The face, so beautiful in its new humility grew paler still, and a shadow crept into the lovely dark eyes.

"Oh! Fred, that was my punishment!" she whispered, in choked accents. "I forgot her—everything, in my wicked suspicions of you, and when I heard she was dead I felt that my heart would break."

As she finished speaking, the sound of a child's voice broke upon their ears, and the next moment the door opened and Pearl came running into the room.

"Papa told me the boo'ful lady was my mamma," she cried, climbing up on to Lady Leigh's lap, and putting her arms round her neck. "Are you my mamma? Why won't you speak?" she added, opening her eyes wide as she gazed into the lovely face.

A bewildered expression, half hope, half dazed, flashed into Lady Leigh's eyes as she saw the proud smile that hovered round Sir Frederic's mouth.

"Fred!" she breathed, "is—is this—I!"

"Our child!" he interrupted. "Yes, darling, I could not part with her; she was the only remembrance of you I had, and deeming you heartless and selfish, I thought it was no wrong to publish that paragraph."

"Heaven has been too kind," she whispered again, bending her head till it rested on the child's. "When did you forgive me?"

"I half forgave you when I saw you hanging over Pearl in my hall, for I saw then that you had womanly tenderness in your heart though you tried to stifle it; but it was complete when you came out here and suffered the hardships and horrors of war for my sake. I saw how tenderly you watched that dying soldier before we left the camp. You did not see me."

"Fred, my future life shall prove the strength of my love," she murmured.

"It is proved now," he answered, gathering mother and child in his arms. "Have you heard from Gertrude yet?"

"Yes, she has gone home with Bertie. They are to be married in the winter—New Year's Day—I believe," she replied. "I have written and told her the truth," she added.

A flood of golden sunlight came across the room, resting on their heads and glorifying their peaceful, calm faces, and the sounds of music from the street below came to them as they sat there quiet and silent. Their hearts were too full for speech just then.

"They could but love and golden silence keep."

"Our story will cause a stir in the fashionable world when we arrive in England," remarked Sir Frederic, taking her hand in his. "You have the ring on," he added; "you did not discard that when you again assumed your maiden name."

"Yes," she replied, touching one of the stones and disclosing a wedding ring inside. "I have always worn it, Fred. Though my pride kept me silent, my heart was always crying out for you."

"We will forget all the past now," he said, drawing her closer to him, and pressing a kiss on the pure white brow. "The future is ours."

"Ah! Fred, you are far better than I," she answered, with sweet humility in the low, clear voice. "I do not deserve this, save by the love I bear you, which has never changed, though I did leave you in the first flush of my jealousy."

"Hush! I will not hear you speak so. You are a true woman, my life, making one mistake which will serve as a lesson."

And well do vanish'd frowns enhance  
The charm of every heightened glance;  
And dearer seems each dawning smile  
For having lost its light awhile,"

he quoted, as she raised her eyes, brimming with pure, passionate love, to his face; and

then he drew her once more into his arms, and she laid her head on his breast with a soft low sigh, feeling that now she had found her haven of rest.

[THE END.]

### FACETIÆ.

"Mamma don't like me to go out on a windy day," said Angela. "My eyelashes do get in such a tangle."

A woman has acquired the art of whistling. She probably learned it from hearing her husband when the milliner's bill was wheeled home.

Jessie, aged five: "My mamma's got a new silk dress, and your mamma won't." Harry, aged four: "I don't care; my mamma can take her teeth out, and your mamma can't."

"Oh, mamma!" cried a little girl, whose mother was visiting a rich old aunt, who had just been married; "you said Aunt Sophy's new husband had regular plantations for her feet, but I don't see anything growing on them."

SOMETHING FRESH.—"Is there anything fresh in news?" said the reporter, sticking his head in at the door of a hatter's establishment in search of news-items. "Well, you're about the freshest thing I've seen this morning," replied the merchant, with a grin.

THE UNREASONABLE FELLOW!—A bachelor says that all he should ask for in a wife would be a good temper, health, good understanding, agreeable physiognomy, figure, good connection, domestic habits, resources of amusement, good spirits, conversational talents, elegant manners, and—money!

"Oh! yes," said the tramp, as a tear glistened like a gum-drop on his sun-burned face, "I served during the entire war." After stowing away the comfortable breakfast that was given him he finished the sentence:—"I was a waiter in a restaurant."

A young lady recently remarked that she could not understand what her brother George Henry saw in the girls that he liked there so well, that for her part she would not give the company of one young man for that of twenty girls.

"No," said a fond mother, speaking proudly of her twenty-five-year-old daughter—"no, Mary isn't old enough to marry yet. She cries when anyone scolds her, and until she becomes hardened enough to talk back vigorously she ain't fit for a wife."

A rich miser has a niece whom he proclaims to be his sole heiress, but who has never seen any of his money. "Your niece is twenty years old," says a friend; "you ought to do something towards getting her settled." "Oh, well," replied the miser, after reflection, "I will pretend to be ill."

"I met X this afternoon with his bride. They have just returned from their wedding tour." "Where are they going to live?" "I don't know. He told me he had been house-hunting since yesterday morning, and intended to take a flat." "Ah! indeed! he has decided to follow his wife's example."

THE HUNTING PARSON.—A well-known hunting poem, entitled "Billodon Coplew," was written by a clergyman who was frequently seen with two or three of the Midland packs, and the following anecdote is told of him:—Some of his brethren of the cloth were showing him up on account of his sporting propensities, to his bishop, who was inclined to wink at a few failings which "leaned to virtue's side," and was satisfied with the merits of his otherwise irreproachable character. Among other enormities, they represented that Mr. — was actually going to ride a match at the county races. "Is he, indeed?" said the amiable and good-natured old bishop—"Is he, indeed? Then I will bet you half-a-crown he wins!"

MODERN GIRLDE OF VENUS.—A coat-sleeve.

A BARGAIN.—A ludicrous transaction, in which each party thinks he cheated the other largely.

ADVICE TO WIVES.—Don't make up your mind that your husband is an angel; and don't palm yourself off on him as one either.

HIS DEBUT.—"Has the new tenor a good voice?"—"Oh, yes, you could hear it above all the hissing."

A SHARP-TALKING lady was reproved by her husband, who requested her to keep her tongue in her mouth.—"My dear," she said, "it's against the law to carry concealed weapons."

"I hope this hand is not a counterfeit," said a lover, as he was toying with his sweetheart's fingers.—"The best way to find out is to ring it," was the neat reply.

SATIRICAL.—An obituary says:—"Mr. — was an estimable citizen. He lived uprightly; he died with perfect resignation—he had been recently married."

"Dear me!" exclaimed a lady, as she looked at the bon-constrictor in a show, "why the skin of the creature is of a regular tartan pattern!"—"It is, my dear," remarked her husband, "and that is what Shakespeare alluded to when he talked about a snake being scotched."

BRIDGET has accidentally dropped a lighted match on some dry clothes, which have ignited and endanger the house. Mrs. S. (rushing in to the kitchen): "Why, Bridget, pour some water on the fire, quick!"—Bridget: "Och, it's no use, mum, the water is hot."

A VERY polite and impressive gentleman, meeting a boy in the street, said, "My dear boy, may I inquire where Robinson's shop is?"—"Certainly, sir," said the boy, very respectfully. After waiting a few minutes, the gentleman said, "Well, my boy, where is it?"—"I have not the least idea," said the urchin.

The music master says very affably:—"Now, you see, children, in a march we always have two beats to a measure, to accommodate the step; for I don't know of anything that has three feet, except a milking-stool."—"Or a yard-stick!" added a bright little girl in the back row.

HIS POSITION.—Johnny came home from school one day very much excited:—"What do you think, pa? Joe Stewart, one of the big boys, had an argument with the teacher about grammar."—"What position did Joe take?"—"His last position was across a desk, pa, face down."

A MAN suddenly ended his bachelor career by marrying a widow worth £60,000. "Don't imagine," said he to one of his friends, "that I am simply marrying for money. If she had had only £30,000 I should have married her just the same."

A GENTLEMAN at a recent fancy bazaar felt alarmed at the reply, "one guinea," to the question, "What is the price of that bouquet, my lady?" He was economic or sarcastic, and said, "I'll buy half of it, if you will make half-a-guinea's worth."—"Very good," was the cool answer, and my lady cut off the stems and presented them to him. He was not a bad fellow, for he took the stalks and paid the money.

APPLYING FOR A HUSBAND.—In the early days of July, 1831, a tall and handsome young woman applied at the offices of the Préfecture de la Seine to have her name entered in the register as one of the young persons who were to be married by the City of Paris, and provided with a dowry and outfit, in commemoration of the first anniversary of the July Revolution. The clerk, seeing that she was alone, asked her why her intended had not come with her.—"My intended!" the damsel exclaimed in astonishment, "why, monsieur, I haven't got one. I thought the Corporation found everything!"

"Or late years," says Mrs. Partington, "my physician has taken to confounding his own physics."

A WOMAN went to the police headquarters to have them hunt for her missing husband.—"What is his distinguishing feature?"—"A large Roman nose," she answered.—"Then he won't be found," emphatically exclaimed a policeman, "for a nose of that kind never turns up."

"Do you know why you and George remind me of two shades of one colour?" asked a young lady of a companion who had been engaged for a good many years.—"No," was the reply.—"I'll tell you, then; it's because you don't match."

In a family where the best of harmony does not prevail the couple try all the same to make the outside world believe that all is lovely therein. "My husband and I," simpered the lady, the other day, "intended to have ourselves painted together for the exhibition."—"By a battle painter?" sneeringly asked one of her friends, who was acquainted with the affairs of the happy family.

"My dear," said the aunt of a young widow to her niece, one day, "is that your husband's portrait on the wall?"—"Yes, Auntie."—"How blissfully happy! and what a heaven on earth must have been his life below," simpered the aunt. "Ah, yes," said the widow, "but we divided the thing up, so that when he became blissful in heaven I became happy on earth."

UNDER THE EMPIRE.—A man fell into the water, and, being unable to swim, called aloud for help. Two sergeants de ville were patrolling the quay at the time, but they paid no heed to his cries. Just as he was at the point of drowning a happy thought crossed his brain. Summoning his remaining strength he struck up the "Marseillaise," which at that time was a forbidden song. In a moment the policemen plunged into the water, rescued the drowning man, and took him off to prison.

A MAN lately entered a tavern in France, looking dreadfully wearied, and with a face as long as a crescent moon. He seated himself languidly at a table where a previous customer was taking refreshment.—"Sir," said the latter, sympathetically, "you appear much fatigued."—"Yes," replied the other. "Headwork, sir—headwork!"—"Dramatic writer, possibly?"—"No, sir, I am a hair-dresser, and to-day shaved twenty stubbly beards, and cut the hair of thirty heads."

WHY is it that the clerks in telephone-offices are chiefly women? Mrs. Brown made this inquiry of her husband.—"Well," answered Mr. Brown, "the managers of the telephone-offices were aware that no class of clerks work so faithfully as those who are in love with their labour; and they knew that women would be fond of the work in telephone-offices."—"What is the work in a telephone-office?"—"Mrs. Brown further inquired.—"Talking," answered Mr. Brown; and the conversation came to an end.

SOME LEGAL ADVICE.—A few days since, writes an attorney, as I was sitting with my friend D. in his office, a client came in and said, "Mr. D. W., the livery stable-keeper, tricked me shamefully yesterday, and I want to be even with him."—"State your case," said D. "I asked him how much he'd charge me for a horse to go to Richmond. He said half-a-sovereign. I took the horse, and when I came back he said he wanted another half-sovereign for coming back, and made me pay it." D. gave his client some legal advice, which he immediately acted upon, as follows: He went to the livery stable-keeper and said, "How much will you charge for a horse to go to Windsor?" The man replied, "A sovereign." Client accordingly went to Windsor, came back by railroad, and went to the livery stable-keeper, saying, "Here is your money," paying him a sovereign. "Where is my horse?" said W. "He is at Windsor," says the client. "I only hired him to go to Windsor."



## SOCIETY.

When Her Majesty was last at Windsor she gave two sittings to Mr. Sargent for a picture representing Her Majesty holding a drawing-room at Buckingham Palace, which was ordered about a year ago. Mr. Sargent attended the drawing-rooms that were held last March for the purpose of taking notes and sketches. The picture is intended to be a companion to a similar one which was painted about 1860.

At the forthcoming anniversary celebrations of the Most Illustrious Order of St. Patrick, Prince Albert Victor will be installed a Knight of the Order, with which the Prince of Wales became connected in 1869. Great preparations are being made for the coming celebrations, which are to be on a scale of unusual splendour. St. Patrick's Hall in Dublin Castle is being specially prepared for the occasion.

The favourite writing-paper of the Princess of Wales is a blue bank paper, with a facsimile of her signature of Christian name in gold-embossed across the upper left-hand corner, and the day of the week in the same style on the top line at the right. The Queen uses black-edged paper, with the address, Windsor Castle, Balmoral, or Osborne, on the top line in plain black and gold letters, and in the upper left-hand corner "V.R.," and the crown embossed in red, black, and gold.

THE PRINCESS BEATRICE is one of the most able and accomplished of our princesses—a good linguist, a thorough musician, both in theory and in practice. Her Royal Highness, like the Princess Louise, draws well, paints, and models, and she has added photography to her other accomplishments.

THE EMPRESS EUGENIE has, it is stated, postponed the removal of the remains of the Emperor Napoleon and the Prince Imperial from Chislehurst to the new mausoleum at Farnborough for some time, to meet the convenience of certain distinguished Bonapartists who are anxious to be present at the ceremony.

A serious and interesting wedding was that of Lord Dornier and Miss Bald, which took place at the Oratory, Brompton, on the 8th ult. The six bridesmaids were in costumes composed of white nun's veiling, with waist-coats and sashes of pale yellow, wreaths of ivy and yellow iris, and tulle veils. Each carried a white fan painted with yellow chrysanthemums, and a basket of yellow flowers and ferns, the bridegroom's gift. The bride's dress consisted of corseage and train of white broadened velvet, and petticoat of silk, trimmed with Brussels lace and panels of pearl embroidery. The page who carried her train was in full Highland costume.

A MARRIAGE is spoken of between the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, the Emperor's youngest brother, and the Princess Alexandra of Greece. Owing to the youth of the Princess the official announcement of the marriage will not be made till next year.

At the celebration of the majority of Prince Albert Victor the Princess of Wales wore a dress of red and white broché velvet and tulle; the pattern of shaded apple blossom; the low pointed bodice was covered with magnificent diamonds, and, in addition to the parure of these precious stones, Her Royal Highness also wore a magnificent pearl necklace. Princess Victoria, Princess Louise, and Princess Maud were dressed alike in skirts of white tulle, spotted with chenille. The low bodices were of white satin broché, likewise studded with small spots. Princess Victoria wore her hair high; the younger Princesses' hair was simply hanging down their backs.

## STATISTICS.

THE light of an electric lamp travels at the rate of 187,200 miles a second; that of the sun 186,500, and that of a petroleum lamp 186,700.

STEEL RAILS IN THE UNITED STATES.—The productive capacity of steel rail mills of the United States is about 1,600,000 tons per annum. About 600,000 tons went into new lines last year, and the amount used as renewals, new second track, and siding is estimated at 650,000 tons, or 5·42 per cent. of the total amount of rails in track. This rate is equivalent to a renewal of the lines once in 18·4 years.

TELEGRAPH.—The number of hands employed at the General Post Office Telegraph Department is 2,285, and consisting of 1,186 male and 683 female operators, together with 416 messengers. The number of electric circuits is 732, of which 331 are metropolitan and 351 provincial. The number of messages sent and received per day is from 50,000 to 60,000, exclusive of press messages, which amount to several hundreds of newspaper columns daily. To the above total, the metropolis contributes from 6,000 to 7,000 messages daily.

## GEMS.

PLEASURE may be aptly compared to many very great books, which increase in real value in the proportion they are abridged.

It is with narrow-souled people as with narrow-necked bottles, the less they have in them the more noise they make in pouring it out.

SOME have estates and no children to inherit them; others have children and no estates to leave them. Those that have both have reason to be thankful; those that have neither may the better be content.

IF you have great talents industry will improve them; if very moderate abilities industry will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well-directed labour. Nothing is ever to be attained without it.

EVERY man in his own life has follies enough—in his own mind troubles enough—in the performance of his own duties deficiencies enough—in his fortunes evils enough—with-out minding other people's business.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LOBSTER CROQUETTES.—Chop the lobster very fine, season with pepper and salt, and mix with bread-crumbs; moisten with cream, if possible, if not use melted butter with a little water; shape in round, flat cakes, and dry quickly in hot lard.

POUND-CAKE WITH FRUIT.—One and-a-half pounds each of butter, sugar, and raisins, one and a quarter pounds of flour, fifteen eggs, a small plate of sliced citron, and a heaping teaspoonful of mace. Wash the butter, work out the water, and cream the sugar with it. Rub the raisins in a little flour, and put them in last.

SNOW PANCAKES.—It is not generally known that snow is a good substitute for egg in both puddings and pancakes. Two tablespoonfuls may be taken as the equivalent of an egg. Take it from a clean spot, and the sooner it is used after it is taken in doors the better. It is to be beaten in, just as eggs would be.

RABBIT A LA FRANÇAISE.—Cut the rabbit in pieces, and flavour it highly with salt and pepper, and a very little mace. Wash cover it with water. When the meat is quite tender mix some flour with a large piece of butter; when the gravy is quite thick, add half-a-pint of port wine. Send it to the table very hot.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

A PHILOSOPHER'S IDEA OF HAPPINESS.—Happy is the man who eats only for hunger, drinks only for thirst; who stands on his legs, and lives according to reason, and not according to fashion; who provides for whatever is necessary and useful, and expends nothing for ostentation and pomp.

IN the year 1784 theatrical managers were arbitrary. A theatrical placard contained the decree, "We hereby command, for the comfort of the public, that persons occupying the first row of seats have to lie down, the second to kneel, the third to sit, and the fourth to stand." More advice said, "The public is forbidden to laugh because the play is a tragedy."

AFTER SIX HUNDRED YEARS.—Recently the tomb of Edward III. in Westminster Abbey, was opened, and the body of "Longshanks," as he was called, was found in a remarkably good state of preservation. The flesh of the face had turned to a yellow powder, but the part in the hair was still there, and the shape and form of the body remained intact. Around the head was a narrow silver band, on which was engraved his name. The remains were placed in the tomb six hundred years ago.

LIBERALITY AND FRUGALITY.—There is a loose way of handling money, without thinking of the purposes it ought to serve, which some people mistake for liberality, but which is nothing but wastefulness. There is also a grasping way of withholding it which is mistaken for frugality, but which is only miserliness. The wise man values money for certain ends which it will serve, and, striving to promote these ends, he is too intelligent to be either miserly or wasteful. He systematically hoards means, whatever they may be, and by wasting nothing in unprofitable ways he can afford to be liberal, while in being wisely liberal in the right direction he is most truly frugal.

THE WEALTH OF THE SEA.—In representing the wealth contained in the sea, Professor Huxley has pointed out that an acre of good fishing ground will yield more food in a week than an acre of the best land will in a year. He also has drawn a vivid picture of a "mountain of cod," 120 to 130 feet in height, which, for two months in every year moves westward and southward past the Norwegian coast. Every square mile of this colossal column contains 120,000,000 of fishes, which, even on short rations, consume no fewer than 840,000,000 of herrings every week. The whole catch of the Norwegian fisheries never exceed in a year more than half a square mile of this "cod mountain," and one week's supply of the herrings needed to keep that area of cod from starving. The harvest of the sea is truly inexhaustible.

THE ORIGINAL JUDGE LYNCH.—Who the original Judge Lynch was—if such a personage ever really existed—is a mystery. The earliest date assigned to this exhibition of a developed "iron conscience" is, according to the Galway Council Book, the year 1493, when an Irishman in municipal authority in the county of Galway, and named James Lynch, hanged his own son out of a window for despoiling and murdering strangers, "without martial or common law, to show a good example to posterity." Another ancestral derivation is to be found in one Lynch, who, about 1687, was sent to America to suppress piracy. As justice was not administered with much rigour or formality in the colonies, it is presumed that this Judge Lynch was empowered to proceed summarily against the pirates, and thus originated the term. The opinion which traces the expression to a Mr. Lynch, founder of the town of Lynchburg, in Virginia, is entirely unsupported by any authority beyond identity of name; but it is curious to remember that so long ago as the reign of Richard II. there was a current doggerel distich: "First hang and draw; then hear the cause by Lydford law."

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B. D. M.—We know nothing to the contrary.  
 DORINE.—August 11, 1866, came on Saturday.  
 C. C. H.—The marriage under the circumstances stated would be legal.  
 J. S.—1. Certainly. 2. Yes, with the consent of her parents.  
 M. A. T.—A good chemist is the person to whom you should apply.  
 W. W.—1. Yes. 2. We are unable to say whether it is or not.

C. M.—A letter will reach the gentleman named through the post-office.

O. R. P.—1. Nov. 27, 1864, came on Sunday. 2. You write a good hand.

ALFRED W.—The salary of the Lord Chancellor is £10,000 a year.

M. H. V.—The claim will never be properly prosecuted until you enlist in your behalf the services of an experienced and reliable lawyer. Do so without delay.

C. M. W.—1. The professional man you mention is a married man with a large family. 2. We have no means of knowing. It is his private business.

C. V. W.—1. Glycerine and borax water will help to remove freckles and freckles. Apply to the face every night and morning. 2. No remedy.

LISA.—1. Respond according to the question; a bow will sometimes answer. 2 and 3. Yes or no, according to the intimacy of the parties.

C. C. W.—As a rule, letters requesting information through this column are answered in the order in which they are received.

L. W.—A diving-bell would be of great aid to you. It is very useful in the operation of collecting sunken materials, &c.

D. L. K.—Shrievalty and sheriffalty (if there be such a word) are synonymous words, signifying the office or sphere of jurisdiction of a sheriff.

C. C. M.—We would not advise you to invest in the bonds named without making further inquiries concerning them.

A. D. F.—The Fuschia was named after the great German botanist Leonard Fusch. It originally came from Mexico.

A. A.—The witnesses to the will and the testator must all be present together when it is signed or the will is invalid.

E. G. P.—The word "segreant" in heraldry, referring to certain heraldic animals, merely means that they are standing erect on their hind legs.

C. C. G.—The landlord can distrain at once, so you had better go and see him and compromise the matter as best you can.

LORENZO.—Not more than twenty-nine can be held either in hand or crib at cribbage. In playing three handed cribbage only one card is thrown out for crib.

G. C. D.—It is a very simple experiment, and the result easily explained on what is known as the principle of the equal transmissibility of fluid pressure. We have not space to discuss the point.

A. V. N.—A decree nisi means "unless" cause is shown within a prescribed time to annul it. If no such cause is shown within the prescribed time, the decree becomes absolute, and the parties are divorced.

ANNETTE.—Why bemoan your fate without striving to do anything to remedy matters? If you were to put your shoulders thoroughly to the wheel, and work with all your heart, you would soon find a way out of your difficulties.

"TOMMY ATKINS."—The Fusiliers were so named because they were formerly armed with fuses with alikes to cast them at the enemy. The 7th, or Royal English Fusiliers, was raised 11th June, 1685; the 21st or Royal North British, 23rd September, 1769; the 53rd or Royal Welch, 17th March, 1688.

M. D.—1. Yes. 2. The history of the Roman Catholic Church begins with the pastoral commission given after Christ's resurrection to the apostle Peter, who, according to ecclesiastical tradition, sealed his apostolic labours with martyrdom at Rome in the year 67, on the same day as the apostle Paul.

W. M. G.—The young lady referred to evidently wished to avoid any suspicion that she is directly seeking your society and purposely encouraging your attentions. If you have any serious idea of proposing to her, you should carry your resolution into effect at the first opportunity.

C. L. S.—Quite grammatical. It is often exemplified by the old line from Terence

"The quarrels of lovers is the renewal of love."

If you remember in English the verb "to be" takes the same case after it as it does before it, viz. the nominative, and when these nominatives are of different numbers it may agree with either. It would, therefore, have been equally correct in the above case to have said "the quarrels of lovers are," &c.

G. B. W.—You were more to blame than the guard of the train, and cannot, therefore, claim any compensation.

J. H.—Get an introduction through some one who knows the fair lady. A personal acquaintance may lessen your admiration of her, particularly if you discover that your love is unrequited.

W. G. F.—Take lessons from an accomplished professor. You will do it in half the time and with half the labour, and be a better player in the end than by trying to teach yourself.

W. P. H.—China-India, sometimes called India beyond the Ganges, and also Indo-China, is the peninsula lying between the China Sea and the Sea of Bengal, comprising Burmah, Siam, Annam, and the Malay peninsula.

C. C.—Racing watches or horse-timers have a separate second hand, which can be started and stopped by touching a spring, so as to time the horses in going round the track. They are made with such care that they will mark a sixth part of a second.

S. D. G.—There are many ways of drawing up such an agreement. A simple letter is as good as anything. Let one party write to the other making the offer, and let the other write and accept it. The two letters form a perfectly binding agreement.

EVIE.—To preserve natural flowers, dip them in melted paraffin, withdrawing them quickly. The liquid should be only just hot enough to maintain its fluidity, and the flowers should be dipped in one at a time, held by the stalks, and moved about for an instant, to get rid of air bubbles. Fresh-cut flowers, free from moisture, make the best specimens.

C. M. W.—1. The "Tam o'Shanter" caps, modified in outline, are fashionable for young girls, and dark velvet, in any of the new shades, is the popular material for their construction. 2. Embroidered velvet crowns are seen on many new walking hats, with narrow brims of plain velvet, and a profuse garniture of fancy feathers mingled with ostrich tips.

## THE WELCOME HOME.

Toll-worn and weary, far away we wander  
 To seek the needful rest we find not here,  
 Though nowhere in the world could friends be fonder,  
 And nowhere in the world are scenes more dear.

A wish we feel to get beyond the border  
 Of ceaseless toil and every worldly theme,  
 And for a season list to nature's teaching,  
 While revelling in Lethe's gentle stream.

But, oh, how sweet when sufficed with roving,  
 And the sick brain regains its healthy tone,  
 To turn our thoughts once more to life and loving,  
 While hastening homeward to rejoin our own!  
 To know that hearts will throb with joy to meet us—  
 That eyes will beam with pleasure when we come—  
 That voices kind, in ecstasy, will greet us—  
 What joy lives in the glorious welcome home!

F. S. S.

H. C. H.—The remedy for asthma to which you refer is prepared as follows: Etheral tincture of lobelia, two ounces; tincture of asafoetida, one ounce; laudanum, one ounce; iodide of potash, two ounces; simple syrup, four ounces. Mix. Dose, a teaspoonful every two hours.

C. L. C.—The prairie wolf, which the Mexicans call coyote, is smaller than the grey wolf, and is much like the jackal. The true wolf has a howl like that of a dog, but the prairie wolf has only a kind of snapping bark, whence it is sometimes called the barking wolf. It lives in burrows on the great plains, is very swift, and hunts in packs.

BERNIE.—Bergamot is a kind of citron, belonging to the same family of fruits as the orange, lemon, and lime. It is sometimes called bergamot orange on account of its resemblance to that fruit. The oil of bergamot to which you refer is distilled from the rind; or it can be made by grating the rind and then pressing it in glass vessels.

STUDIOUS.—1. There are various suppositions in regard to earthquakes. The most plausible theory seems to be that the sudden expansion of steam generated by subterranean heat is the main occasion of them. 2. In the Lisbon earthquake many of the rivers and lakes of Great Britain were disturbed. The shock was felt over the whole of Europe, and extended even to the West Indies.

ALISA.—1. Food containing starch and sugar will help to fatten you, if anything will. Outdoor exercise, regular habits, and the cultivation of a cheerful spirit will also aid to impart to your face and form the "roundness" so many persons covet. Live liberally, and eschew everything of an acid nature. Milk is very fattening to some systems. Try it. 2. Your composition and handwriting are both good.

SCOTCH LADDER.—The Suez Canal, which connects Suez, in the Red Sea, with Port Said, on the Mediterranean, is one hundred miles in length. It was commenced by a company—aided by large subscriptions of the Governments of Egypt, France, and England, in 1858, and opened on November 17, 1869. It is 72 feet wide at the bottom, about 300 feet the surface, and 26 feet in depth, easily passing the largest vessels. The controlling interest in the canal was purchased subsequently to 1874 by the British Government, which now holds it.

R. C.—We cannot say whether the remedies for deafness referred to are reliable or not. They may be all that is claimed for them, but we advise you to test them well before purchasing them.

H. F. D.—1. An acre is a piece of land containing 160 square rods or perches, or 4,840 square yards, or 43,560 square feet. This is the English statute acre. Your handwriting would answer very well for office work.

W. J.—You have been misinformed, or have misunderstood your teacher. Like the planets, the sun is all the time spinning like a top. It turns round once in about twenty-five days and eight hours, moving always from east to west.

A. C. E.—Everything depends on the terms of the lease and the exact wording of the clause in question. If it is an ordinary form no doubt cases have been decided on the legal meanings of the words in question. Do nothing rash in the matter.

ALPHA BETA.—Your sister may have been careless and rude, but she was your sister, and you had no right to act as you did. Your mother was quite right to reprove you severely. Had she been lost or any accident happened to her you would never have forgiven yourself.

W. D. C.—We refer you to "Hallam's Literary Essays and Characters." Hallam will be remembered as having in 1830 received one of the two fifty-guinea gold medals awarded by George IV. for eminence in historical composition, and Washington Irving received the other.

APHIA.—The various applications of *grout* are very numerous. It is often used merely as a word of emphasis, or to intensify the meaning of the words with which it is associated. As used by the writer quoted it signifies *wide extent*. The use of the singular number in the case quoted is correct. Good judges differ upon the subject.

M. M. C.—1. The word calico is made from Calicut, a seaport of India, on the Malabar coast, from which calicoes were first brought. 2. Cambric was first made in Cambrai, France; hence its name. 3. The word cotton comes from the Arabic word *koton*. 4. Muslin is from the French *mousseline*, named from Moulins or Moul, in Asiatic Turkey, where this cloth was first manufactured.

M. R. C.—To see under water, the experience of a correspondent may aid you to some extent. He says: "I once had occasion to examine the bottom of a mill-pond for which I constructed a float out of inch boards, sufficient to buoy me up. Through the centre of the float I cut a hole, and placed a blanket over it, when I was enabled to clearly observe objects on the bottom, and several lost tools were discovered and picked up. I am satisfied that, where the water is sufficiently clear, this plan could be successfully used for searching for sunken articles." The blanket excludes or darkens the direct rays of the sun, and has the effect of lighting up the "fluid world."

MARIE W.—Dr. Schwenninger, of Munich, it is stated, has discovered a new mode of reducing the bulk of the human frame. It is never to eat and drink at the same time, but to let two hours intervene. He has, it is said, cured Prince Bismarck of a tendency to obesity in this way. Fat people have now their choice between four systems: (1) The original Banting, which consists of eating nothing containing starch, sugar, or fat; (2) the German Banting, which allows fat, but forbids sugar or starch; (3) a Munich system, which consists of being clothed in wool, and sleeping in flannel blankets instead of sheets; (4) not eating and drinking at the same time.

C. L. G.—The bridge over the Rio Canal in Venice, Italy, connecting the Doge's palace and the State prison, was called the "Bridge of Sighs" because criminals were conveyed across to hear their sentence. Byron immortalised it in the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*, but it is said that no prisoner whose name is worth remembering, or whose sorrow deserved sympathy, ever crossed it. A modern writer says: "The name of the bridge was given by the people from that outpouring of compassion which enables the Italians to pity even rascality in difficulties." It was simply a covered passage way.

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